

*My Relationship
With Lord Kṛṣṇa*



My Relationship With Lord Kṛṣṇa

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami



GN Press, Inc.

Persons interested in the subject matter of this book are invited to correspond with our secretary:

GN Press, Inc.
R.D. 1, Box 837-K
Port Royal, PA 17082

© 1995 GN Press, Inc.
All Rights Reserved.
Printed in the United States of America
ISBN 0-911233-57-X

GN Press gratefully acknowledges the BBT for the use of verses and purports from Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. All such verses and purports are © BBT.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Gosvāmī, Satsvarūpa Dāsa

My Relationship With Lord Kṛṣṇa / Satsvarūpa Dāsa
Goswami.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-911233-57-1

1. International Society for Krishna Consciousness—
Doctrines. 2. Krishna (Hindu deity) I. Title.

BL1285.845.G676 1995

294.5'512—dc20

94-42617

CIP

Contents



Day One:

<i>Recognition Of My Relationship With Lord Kṛṣṇa</i>	<i>1</i>
---	----------

Day Two:

<i>Kṛṣṇa Is Great; I Am Small</i>	<i>19</i>
-----------------------------------	-----------

Day Three:

<i>My Constitutional Position</i>	<i>37</i>
-----------------------------------	-----------

Day Four:

<i>Speaking To Kṛṣṇa</i>	<i>61</i>
--------------------------	-----------

Day Five:

<i>Turning Toward Kṛṣṇa</i>	<i>79</i>
-----------------------------	-----------



*Recognition
Of My
Relationship
With
Lord Kṛṣṇa*

Day One



I have a relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is God. I don't know Him very well, not like I know Śrīla Prabhupāda. Even Prabhupāda sometimes seems far away. (I am even afraid to approach *him* sometimes.) Kṛṣṇa is all-pervading—I can feel that—and yet far away, the Supreme Person. Lord Kṛṣṇa is present in His *mūrti* form.

We can associate with Kṛṣṇa in His holy names. This sound vibration is the best and safest way to be with Him. I say I will also try to approach Him by writing.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is elusive, *adhokṣaja*. He puts a curtain between Himself and the foolish people of the world. He lets them do what they want, although He gives them the best advice—give up all varieties of religion and surrender to Me.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is very near and also very far away. Anything we see is Kṛṣṇa. There is nothing that is not Kṛṣṇa. It's rare that someone can know Him in truth in

His personal form. To be able to approach all-attractive Kṛṣṇa is the gift of the pure devotee.

We first learn of our relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa by hearing from authority. Imagine someone meeting Śrīla Prabhupāda for the first time and expressing his understanding of his relationship with God. Śrīla Prabhupāda would probably caution him: the best way to understand one's relationship with the Supreme is to hear from the Supreme through the scriptures and to be guided by His authorized representative, the spiritual master.

If the person persisted, Śrīla Prabhupāda would point out that although his feelings are sincere and earnest, they still have to be purified with education in God consciousness. Śrīla Prabhupāda would not discourage the young man or woman's earnestness. If the person were really sincere, surely he would recognize in Prabhupāda a true spiritual friend and guide.

I am no longer a young man. I have been hearing from Śrīla Prabhupāda for almost thirty years, but I am still inexperienced in love of God. I don't know Kṛṣṇa. If I say I want to write about my relationship with Kṛṣṇa, am I not like that young person—earnest but unrealized? Like him, I need to hear from guru, *śāstra*, and *sādhū*.

I don't know. I am foolish. "I am not a scholar or a devotee," Śrīla Prabhupāda used to say, "but I am trying to carry out the order of my spiritual master. I don't know Kṛṣṇa, but I know my Guru Mahārāja." This sums up my own approach to Kṛṣṇa—I don't approach Kṛṣṇa directly, but through my spiritual master. Yet my spiritual master told me to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. "Go, my child," said Īśvara Purī, "and chant and dance and tell others about Kṛṣṇa."

Śrīla Prabhupāda wants us to go to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is in our hearts, and the spiritual master encourages us to take shelter of Him. The guru doesn't say, "When you drink water, think of *me*. When you see the sun, know that it is *my* eye. Know that *I* am the sound in ether." He tells us how to find Kṛṣṇa.

Why not then, just write about Kṛṣṇa, instead of "my relationship with"? The topic of Kṛṣṇa is universal, whereas the topic of one *jīva*'s relationship is subjective. I am a *jīva* and this topic is a universal concern. It doesn't matter that I am a unique individual with a unique relationship with Kṛṣṇa. I am writing to purify myself and to better understand the most important thing in my life.

Our budding God consciousness is the spiritual master's gift to us. The spiritual master didn't create us—we are eternal souls—but he awoke us out of our gross ignorance. He saved us from our karma. We cannot even estimate the debt we owe him, yet he tells us, "Go now, serve Lord Kṛṣṇa, worship Him, tell everyone you meet about Kṛṣṇa." He instructs us to take up our relationship with Kṛṣṇa. If a disciple takes his relationship with Kṛṣṇa to heart and shows symptoms of becoming attached to Kṛṣṇa, the spiritual master is pleased.

The *jīva*'s relationship with Kṛṣṇa is clearly explained in the scriptures. Why, then, should we explore our personal relationship with Kṛṣṇa? Although we must make a constant effort to hear about the nature of our relationship with the Lord from the *sāstra*, we need to ask ourselves why, after all these years, we are not better acquainted with Kṛṣṇa. Why don't we speak of His activities and qualities more naturally? Why can't we pray to Him readily as our protector and best friend?

Śrīla Prabhupāda has given each of us permission to speak to Kṛṣṇa directly—while we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and in prayer. Prahllāda Mahārāja says there is nothing wrong with a person, even a child, expressing his sincere feelings to God. We should not abandon our own attempts to offer prayers to the Lord, even though great souls like Brahmā and Śiva are not able to praise Him adequately. Anyone who wishes to get out of the material world should purify himself by offering prayers to the Supreme Lord.



All these years passing and more years to come—I don't know how many or how few. But Kṛṣṇa keeps me in the ISKCON fold, chanting and serving. I have a relationship with Him.

I want to praise Kṛṣṇa, to swim and float and sail on that praise. I want to cross the ocean of nescience on that praise.

“I shall cross over the insurmountable ocean of nescience by being firmly fixed in the service of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. This was approved by the previous *ācāryas*, who were fixed in firm devotion to the Lord, Paramātmā, the Supreme Personality of Godhead” (*Bhāg.* 11.23.58).

“For those who have accepted the boat of the lotus feet of the Lord, who is the shelter of the cosmic manifestation and is famous as Murāri, the enemy of the Mura demon, the ocean of the material world is like the water contained in a calf's hoof print. Their goal is *param padam*, Vaikuṇṭha, the place where there are no material miseries, not the place where there is danger at every step” (*Bhāg.* 10.14.58).

The sages have crossed over to the spiritual world, but they have left their boat of *bhakti* on the shore of this world so we may also cross the material ocean. I want to stay lost in the world of transcendental boats and sages.



I dreamt we were on an island, waiting for a boat. Why don't I remember Kṛṣṇa when I dream? I awoke and thought out so many things and of so many people before I thought of Him.

Speaking of islanders, I remember reading something about people on a cold island and how they survived. Of course, they believed in God and the Catholic Church and in burying their dead according to religious rites. They talked about God in lovely ways, yet I don't remember finding any real God consciousness in their speeches—any delight in God's pastimes or serious thought about the next life. This is true of most people.

Some people assume they are always thinking of God. For example, they don't worry about the earth's steadiness as it sails through space and spins on its axis. They assume the powers that be are taking care of it. They recognize some dependence on God's power—even primitive people worship a higher power—but they take that higher power for granted. When people ignore God's power, they become proud, callous, and hardhearted.

They either become proud of their apparent power, or they become so preoccupied with the struggle for existence that they don't think of God. They even justify their forgetfulness. They see God as a luxury, like

art or poetry. They don't have time for Him. This is blindness. We all share in it to some extent. That's why I'm writing this book to remind us.



My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, You are God. I have heard about You throughout my many lifetimes. In this lifetime I heard about God from my mother and the Catholic Church. That hearing could be counted in the realm of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but You were a vague figure in my mind. If I spend my time writing to You to know You better, it means I will sometimes have to address You when I am uninspired or forgetful. I can't wait until I attain the perfect stage. Please forgive me.

The night is over. Almost-black clouds cruise in the wind like giant birds or undersea fish. I know we are supposed to see God everywhere and always think of Him, but I don't do it. I want to make more effort. Why isn't the most important person in all existence the most important person in my life?

But He is, too.

Then why am I covered and how do I get uncovered?

Nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo: "The Supreme Lord is not attained by expert explanations, by vast intelligence, nor even by much hearing. He is attained only by one who He Himself chooses. To such a person He manifests His own form" (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 3.2.3).

I can't attain Kṛṣṇa by this writing endeavor—not by a flurry of note-taking and self-searching. O Lord of the universe, kindly be visible unto me.



Reading “Chanting the Song Sung by Lord Śiva” from the Fourth Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is helping me to appreciate my relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa. I am a conditioned soul. I can learn from Lord Śiva’s praise of Lord Viṣṇu. Lord Śiva is the greatest devotee; therefore, I accept him as my spiritual master. “Lord Śiva said: You are all the sons of King Prācīnabarhi, and I wish all good fortune to you. I also know what you are going to do, and therefore I am visible to you just to show my mercy upon you” (*Bhāg.* 4.24.27).

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes: “No one should think of the prayers recited by Lord Śiva as being sectarian; rather, they are very confidential, so much so that anyone desiring the ultimate prosperity or auspicious goal of life must take the instructions of Lord Śiva and pray to and glorify the Supreme Personality of Godhead as Lord Śiva himself did” (*Bhāg.* 4.24.31, purport).

The more I read, the more I realize that all the ground has been covered. We already know who the Lord is, who we are, and how to approach Him. All questions are answered in *śāstra*.

This writing, therefore, is not intended as a compilation of perfect statements on the subject. It’s meant to express feeling, prayer, and action. My relationship with Kṛṣṇa has suffered lifetimes of neglect. I can’t expect an easy victory over that neglect. “Nārada penetrated into the service of the Lord by the transcendental vibration.” Brahmā meditated for a hundred of his years. I shouldn’t think I’m going to do better than them.

✱

My Relationship With Lord Kṛṣṇa, #1

Thanks be to God for the
beautiful day. Thank the one who
made it. Be prepared to explain and
defend when they ask, “Who
allowed the lamb to be killed?”
You did it. God sanctioned but
you’ll have to pay reactions.

Better limber up and give strong answers
convincing logic as Śrīla Prabhupāda wants.
My God, Kṛṣṇa, bluish boy,
I’ll describe Him from pictures.
Write inspired even when
half asleep. I’ll start anywhere
with pen or typewriter
from any thought and make a
quick route to His lotus feet.

God made the grains, gave us the seed
for cereal. Man didn’t make it in his factory.
And we enjoy it with our tongue and brain
and stomach which we also didn’t make.
I follow the path of God-proofs,
an example of *acintya-śakti*,
and songs of God reciting what I know.

Some see Him in their hearts always,
Śyāmasundara, threefold-bending form playing
the flute. He banishes all lust
and forgetfulness and illusion, lamentation.
My God Kṛṣṇa, I have to take it on the chin.

What do you mean? I mean hard times
come to all but God is good.
He's testing us. He wants to see how sincere
we are in our dedication to
love Him unalloyed.
Go out and preach and come back enthusiastic
to share God consciousness with us.
"Yes," he says. "I told them what Kṛṣṇa
says, if you don't surrender you're
no better than a cat or dog."
What did they say?
"One man threatened me."

Look at the pictures starting
with His appearance in four-armed form
before Vasudeva and Devakī who accepted
Him that way and bowed and prayed.
The child Kṛṣṇa went to Gokula.
He was a baby. He started to grow and right away
a demon, Pūtānā, came and He killed her.



I say "Kṛṣṇa this" and "Kṛṣṇa that," but what is my
qualification for even reciting His name? Lord Cai-
tanya kindly requested us to chant "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa"
again and again: Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa
Hare Hare/Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare
Hare. Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, worship Kṛṣṇa, hear Kṛṣṇa's
pastimes from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. We have been invit-
ed to practice this *sādhana* under the guidance of the
pure devotee spiritual master who is himself immersed
in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Kṛṣṇa belongs to the unmanifest spiritual world, but He also pervades this world. Try to understand. Don't be faithless. Don't be overcome by the modes of ignorance and passion. "Deluded by the three modes [goodness, passion and ignorance], the whole world does not know Me, who am above the modes and inexhaustible" (Bg. 7.13). Those under the modes don't know that Lord Kṛṣṇa is behind the material background. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "When even those who are in goodness cannot understand, what hope is there for those in passion and ignorance? Kṛṣṇa consciousness is transcendental to all these three modes of material nature, and those who are truly established in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are actually liberated."



Lately, I have been writing candidly of my own little life. Now I have left that with a decision to write about Kṛṣṇa. I feel lonely to be away from myself because I am not yet joined to Kṛṣṇa. But writing about my relationship with Kṛṣṇa shouldn't leave me feeling lonely or dry or merely academic, not if I do it sincerely, personally, and humanly. Prabhupāda stressed that we don't have to give up anything. We can continue being whoever we are. We just have to dovetail our consciousness with the Supreme. He said it isn't difficult.

"One should meditate upon the Supreme Person as the one who knows everything, as He who is the oldest, who is the controller, who is smaller than the smallest, who is the maintainer of everything, who is beyond all material conception, who is inconceivable, and who is always a person. He is luminous like the sun, and He is transcendental, beyond this material nature" (Bg. 8.9).

Śrīla Prabhupāda says that Kṛṣṇa is inconceivable. We can't touch Him by any ordinary process. "Therefore intelligent persons, avoiding useless argument and speculation, should accept what is stated in scriptures like the *Vedas*, *Bhagavad-gītā*, and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and follow the principles they set down. That will lead one to understanding."

✱

My relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa is eternal, is mostly unknown to me, and goes on whether I'm aware of it or not. I didn't know of Lord Kṛṣṇa until I met Śrīla Prabhupāda. In the broader sense that "Lord Kṛṣṇa" means God, I knew of Him, but my conclusion was that He was dead, or that He was present in LSD, He was impersonal, He was not what my priests said He was. I didn't know. I was too dirty and too deranged to know. "Persons who have acted piously in previous lives and in this life and whose sinful activities are completely eradicated are freed from the dualities of delusion, and they engage themselves in My service with determination" (Bg. 7.28).

Prabhupāda taught me about my relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa. "In the association of great devotees, one can be delivered from delusion."

Relationship means *sambandha*. God consciousness comprises three stages: *sambandha* (relationship), *abhidheya* (activities of service), and *prayojana* (the goal of love of Godhead attained). We don't know of our relationship with Kṛṣṇa in the beginning. "Forgotten souls, we." The first stage is to awaken attraction to Madana-mohana, Lord Kṛṣṇa, and to discover, "I am

eternal spirit soul. I have a relationship with the all-great Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

Kṛṣṇa speaks to us. The *śāstras* assure us that God cares for us even more than we care for Him. He wants us to revive our Kṛṣṇa consciousness and to return to Him. “Because you are My very dear friend, I am speaking to you My supreme instruction. . . .” (Bg. 18.64). Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “What Kṛṣṇa is saying in this connection is the most essential part of knowledge, and it should be carried out not only by Arjuna but by all living entities. . . . Everyone who follows the path of Arjuna can become a dear friend to Kṛṣṇa and obtain the same perfection as Arjuna.” (Bg. 18.64–5, purports).

Do we think Kṛṣṇa is just too majestic to approach? Too pure? His pastimes too inconceivable? Is there any point in trying to approach Kṛṣṇa?

“My Lord is so high, you can’t get over Him,
so low, you can’t get under Him,
so wide, you can’t get around Him,
that’s the way of the Lord.”

Kṛṣṇa is approachable, but we can’t study Him by empirical investigation. We have to surrender in devotional service and hear the scriptures from the spiritual master.

It requires years of austerities. “I can only be known by austerity,” Lord Viṣṇu told Lord Brahmā. Saints and sages go to the forest or Himālayas, control their breathing, raise the semen to the brain, refrain from sense enjoyment, and seek God. Preachers sacrifice their physical comfort to tell others about Kṛṣṇa, even at the risk of losing their lives. In the course of preach-

ing, Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself to them. He says, “I am not in the meditation of the *yogī* or in *Vaikuṇṭha*. I am wherever My devotees gather to chant My holy names.”

God is great. I have a relationship with Him. My spiritual master has engaged me in His service.

He is in my heart. “I am seated in everyone’s heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness” (Bg. 15.15).

Dear Lord, I have neglected my relationship with You. I am a writer, by Your grace. You allow me to do this. But when I write, it’s mostly about myself and how I am struggling, my dreams, my poems, what I perceive of the world with my senses, stories I tell, books I’ve read. When I hear descriptions of Your greatness and of Your devotees’ dedication to You, I am inspired. “The pure devotee is always within the core of My heart, and I am always in the heart of the pure devotee. My devotees do not know anything else but Me, and I do not know anyone else but them” (*Bhāg.* 9.4.68).

I thought to cite verses like this and then ask myself, “Why isn’t this true for me? How can I attain it?” Maybe the answers are general, the remedy, too. I don’t always think of the Lord because I am still attached to false ego (*ahaṅkāra*) and to gross and subtle sense gratification. Kṛṣṇa has to reveal Himself to me fully as He does to His pure devotees. I can become eligible by regular chanting and hearing and serving the pure devotees. I know many śāstric verses that state this. One could say, “There’s not so much to say about it in a personal way. Just engage yourself in *śravaṇam-kīrtanam*.”

Yes, but Kṛṣṇa is demanding something of me. If He didn’t demand, I wouldn’t feel this pressure to write of

Him. He demands for our own good. We are suffering in the material world without Him. But if we insist we don't want Him, He'll stay away. We have to show Him that we want to find Him and become dependent on Him, like the pure devotees in His entourage.

"Thereafter, one must seek that place from which, having gone, one never returns, and there surrender to that Supreme Personality of Godhead from whom everything began and from whom everything has extended since time immemorial" (Bg. 15.4). We have to make an effort to turn to Kṛṣṇa. The question before us is whether our service is a genuine way to do this. If it is, then we shouldn't deny it out of laziness or fear.



Śrīla Prabhupāda forced me to break through in my relationship with him when he said, "It's not mechanical that you do the typewriting. If you love me, then I will love you." The same goes for my relationship with Kṛṣṇa and for this writing about it. All I can do is make little entries and offer them to Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa.

In a week we will observe Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva's appearance day. He is an expansion of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, I have a relationship with Him. When Śrīla Prabhupāda left for India in 1970, he told his disciples he might not return. But he assured us that Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva would protect us. He taught us to chant Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva's mantras. That's why we have a relationship with Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva—Śrīla Prabhupāda gave it to us. He told us that our main relationship was with Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana and Lord Caitanya, but he encouraged us to pray to Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva to protect us in our

preaching and to protect our *bhakti*. “One should fix his mind on this original form of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. One should not even divert his attention to other forms of the Lord” (Bg. 18.65, purport).



Lord Kṛṣṇa has infinite relationships. We can't develop only vertically in our relationship with Him. By vertically, I mean just between us and Him. We reach up and Lord Kṛṣṇa reaches down. We need horizontal relationships—relationships with His devotees. Kṛṣṇa wants to see us develop relationships both vertically and horizontally.

There are four kinds of vertical and horizontal relationships: (1) loving service to God; (2) friendship with the devotees (further subdivided into serving and inquiring from advanced devotees, befriending peers, and giving guidance to newcomers); (3) giving Kṛṣṇa conscious instruction to the innocent nondevotees and neophyte devotees; (4) avoiding the demons.

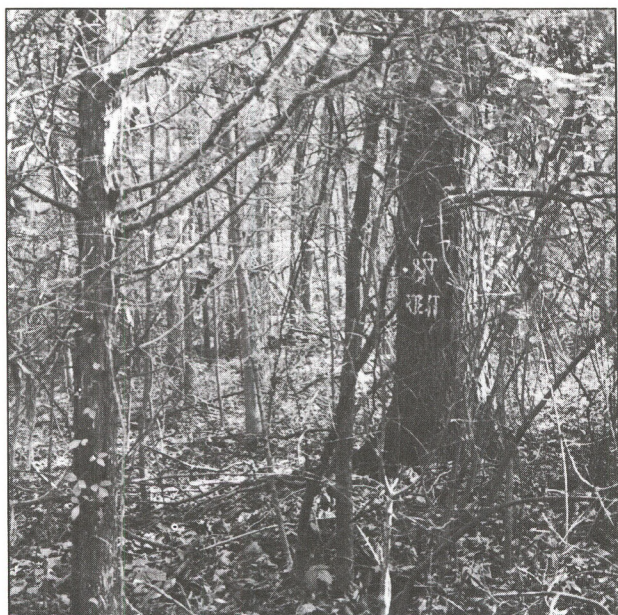
I am aware that relationships can be complicated. As ISKCON devotees, we also have a relationship with the institution and its Governing Body Commission, with individual temples, with other world religions, with national governments, with the media, and with the sky and land. There is no end to relationships in this world. Everyone and everything is interrelated.

Having a relationship with Kṛṣṇa also means having a relationship with Kṛṣṇa's holy names, the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. They're nondifferent—eternal, pure, but, in my case, covered over. Prabhupāda gave me *harināma* initiation in 1966, and I am still chanting on the same red beads. I am proud of the fact that I am a chanter,

although I only chant a meager sixteen rounds a day, and even that, not very well. My relationship with the holy names is habituated to poor practice. I can't avoid this topic if I am going to discuss my relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is the main way to develop a relationship with the Lord in this age of Kali. If we can claim no other relationship, either by scriptural study, Deity worship, or practice of other forms of *sādhana*, but we chant the Lord's names with devotion and tears in our eyes, then we will have a vital connection with Kṛṣṇa. On the other hand, if despite all our studies and active service we have no taste for chanting, then it can be understood that our heart is steel-framed.

I have a personal relationship with the holy name. He allows me to chant and be with Him at any time of day or night in the simplest way. There are no hard and fast rules in chanting. O my Lord, You have made approach to You so easy by Your holy names, and You have invested all Your energies in Your holy name, but due to my longstanding *aparādhas*, I cannot chant with love.

I can say all sorts of negative things about myself in regards to my chanting, that chanting doesn't mean anything to me, etc. Perhaps these estimations are not the whole story. Still, it is a fact that I don't taste nectar. I don't pray and cry to the Lord when I utter His names. Can this writing help?



Krsna is Great;

I am Small

Day Two



In Lord Śiva's song, he states that the Supreme Lord in everyone's heart is the source of our inclinations and disinclinations. It made me think how I woke in the morning and felt disinclined to pray or chant. That disinclination comes from Kṛṣṇa. "Because the *asuras* do not like to engage in the Lord's devotional service, the Lord within gives them the intelligence to forget" (*Bhāg.* 4.24.41, purport). Lord Kṛṣṇa knows everything. I am *anu*, an atomic particle of the Supreme Soul. "Therefore, I repeatedly offer my obeisances unto You."

Lord Śiva prays for purification of the false ego by engaging the self in devotional service. In *ahankāra*, I act for the supposed welfare of my body and self, but I don't know who I am. When I act in my relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa, by rendering service to Him, then my false ego is dissolved and I attain true ego or self-awareness.

Various workers, *yogīs*, and others want to see God in different ways—either as their order-supplier or to become one with Him. The devotees want to see Kṛṣṇa in His complete perfection. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura said, “Don’t try to see Kṛṣṇa, but act in such a way that He sees you.” That expression has a certain application. It doesn’t mean a devotee is disinterested in his Lord’s *darśana*. It means a devotee should first deserve, then desire.

May I one day achieve this state of loving service whereby Lord Kṛṣṇa will be pleased to reveal Himself to me. Even now I hear of His personal activities and I desire to see Him as His devotees see Him. Lord Śiva prays:

“My dear Lord, I wish to see You exactly in the form that Your very dear devotees worship. You have many other forms, but I wish to see Your form that is especially liked by the devotees. Please be merciful upon me and show me that form, for only that form worshipped by the devotees can perfectly satisfy all the demands of the senses” (*Bhāg.* 4.24.44).

Śrīla Prabhupāda discusses *vidhi-mārga* and *rāga-mārga*. He warns us not to jump prematurely to a relationship with Kṛṣṇa in His relationship with the *gopīs*. *Rāga-mārga* is the highest, but devotees should worship the Lord in the temple according to *vidhi-mārga*.

We have so much to learn. We could read all day. Śrīla Prabhupāda has written everything we need to know. Lord Śiva prays to behold the Supreme Lord’s two lotus feet. The nails of His lotus feet will dissipate all darkness in the heart of the conditioned soul. “My dear Lord, kindly show me that form of Yours which

always dissipates all kinds of darkness in the heart of a devotee” (*Bhāg.* 4.24.52).

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “... everyone serious about understanding the transcendental science and seeing the transcendental form of the Lord must first of all attempt to see the lotus feet of the Lord by studying the First and Second Cantos of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. When one sees the lotus feet of the Lord, all kinds of doubts and fears within the heart are vanquished.”

Fear is due to bodily identification, but a realized devotee is free of fear. “The *bhaktas*, the devotees, are fearless and always joyful because they are constantly engaged in the service of the lotus feet of the Lord. . . . By practicing *bhagavad-bhakti-yoga*, one becomes fearless and joyful. Unless one becomes fearless and joyful, he cannot understand the science of God” (*Bhāg.* 4.24.52, purport).



Someone may see the title of these writings, *My Relationship With Lord Kṛṣṇa*, and think I am proud. They might think it’s a *sahajiyā* book and that I’m writing about my *rasa* with Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. Just the use of the word “my” may seem less than the modesty we expect of a Vaiṣṇava when he speaks of his personal life. But this book isn’t puffed up or *sahajiyā*. I do have a relationship with Kṛṣṇa, *my* relationship. Everyone has. I’m a tiny soul (*anu*) who has a personal relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is happy about that, but who is also bewildered about what to do next.

I almost want to deny my relationship with Kṛṣṇa out of humility. But perhaps that kind of humility is not so healthy. What kind of humility is it if we say, “God

doesn't love me. He has better things to do than to care for me. He seems to have forgotten me because of my poor service." Better that we own up to our relationship with Him and love Him for ourselves.

I am determined to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That determination can become selfish or unbalanced. Therefore, we need the association of devotees and the spiritual master's guidance. Selflessness in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a rare gem. We are not meant to lose ourselves, but to give up material selfishness.

The dictionary defines the word "relationship" as, "connection by blood, marriage, etc.; kinship," but our relationship with Kṛṣṇa is not bodily. In His eternal pastimes, Lord Kṛṣṇa sometimes appears as someone's son, cousin, or father, but actually we are all related to Him in spirit. He is the Supreme and all souls are part of Him. We have an eternal relationship of whole and part, of dominant and dominated. He is *puruṣa* and we are *prakṛti*. It's a permanent connection, unlike relationships based on blood or marriage. To make that connection is to perform yoga. *Ahaṁ brahmāsmi*. I am not this body bound for death. Therefore, I am not this man's father, this woman's husband, this man's son. I am an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa.

We seek our relationship with God by going to His devotees. Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "He is not My devotee who says he is My devotee. But he who is a devotee of My devotee is actually My devotee." With other Vaiṣṇavas, we can hear and relish Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. *Satām pra-saṅgān mama vīrya-saṁvido*, "By association with pure devotees," *śraddhā ratir bhaktir anukramiṣyati*, "real devotional service begins."

Ayi nanda-tanuja kiṅkaram—"O son of Mahārāja Nanda [Kṛṣṇa], I am Your eternal servitor, yet some-

how or other I have fallen into the ocean of birth and death. Please pick me up from this ocean of death and place me as one of the atoms of Your lotus feet” (*Śikṣāṣṭakam*, text 5).

Śrīla Prabhupāda quotes the *Śikṣāṣṭakam* when he responds to questions about how we should love God even when we don’t feel His presence. “I know no one but Kṛṣṇa as my Lord, and He shall remain so even if He handles me roughly in His embrace or makes me brokenhearted by not being present before me. He is completely free to do anything and everything, for He is always my worshipful Lord unconditionally.” Don’t demand equal reciprocation. “Kṛṣṇa may be a debauchee and go to all the *gopīs*, leaving me neglected. Let Him enjoy as He likes, as makes Him happy. I love Him in any case. He is the only Lord of my life.” We shouldn’t say, “If He neglects me, then I reject Him. I’ll be my own God or get another Lord.”



My Godbrother, Karṇāmṛta Prabhu, and his wife, Arcana-siddhi, have been interviewing devotees about their relationships with Kṛṣṇa. They speak about faith-building. A devotee will tell them of a crisis in his or her life, how Kṛṣṇa acted to help them, and as a result, how they increased their faith. Certainly a compilation of these testimonies would be evidence of how we all have a personal relationship with Kṛṣṇa, similar to the evidence compiled by William James in *Varieties of Religious Experience*. It’s good for the devotee to “witness” his faith and share with others the true story of Kṛṣṇa acting in his life.

Nobody asked to interview me, but if they did, I would be hesitant. In one sense, I know that Kṛṣṇa is always acting in my life, just as He says in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, “I am seated in everyone’s heart and from Me come knowledge, remembrance, and forgetfulness.” There’s never a time when Kṛṣṇa is not intervening, or taking part closely in our decisions, even sanctioning our nonsense, and giving us the *buddhi-yoga* to go ahead and prosecute Kṛṣṇa consciousness as directed by Śrīla Prabhupāda. But I tend to be very conservative in saying, “That was Kṛṣṇa *right there* who acted at that point in my life.” Alternately, I could say I am still subject to karmic reactions and that these are coming from the laws of nature. Nature is under Kṛṣṇa’s jurisdiction, but she functions indirectly. We all know the mockery that sentimental religionists make out of this when they say, “I was looking for a parking spot in a crowded lot, and Jesus suddenly helped me find one.” We tire of those who claim God (or the son of God) is always intervening to help them fulfill their petty desires.

Yes, it was Kṛṣṇa who helped me to cook the sweet rice nicely, it was Kṛṣṇa who helped me pass my college exams, and who inspired me to look up just in time to avoid being hit by a car. It’s always Kṛṣṇa. Anyway, I’m hesitant to make claims because I’m afraid of being presumptuous.

Also, I have never been able to sustain a life of prayer, although I sometimes write about it and admit that it would be nice. I mean, the state where you are always chanting, praying, and talking to Kṛṣṇa. There is a verse in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that says that the pure devotees always ask permission from the Lord before they act. Prabhupāda also revealed to us how he

prayed to Rādhā-Rāsavihārī on different occasions and other Deity forms of Kṛṣṇa at different times to save his disciples and to protect his Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Prayer is the basis of a personal and real relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

“But those who always worship Me with exclusive devotion, meditating on My transcendental form—to them I carry what they lack, and I preserve what they have” (Bg. 9.22).



The material world is a dangerous place. Kāṁsa, inspired by his evil ministers, sent demons to kill Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, but They easily killed the demons. Even after the cowherd men and their families moved to a sacred place, the demons continued to attack. Lord Kṛṣṇa protected them. The cowherd boys were so confident of Kṛṣṇa’s power that they willingly entered Aghāsura’s mouth. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “Kṛṣṇa is the assurance of safety to everyone.”

We cannot escape danger, although we can take precautions to avoid it. If we practice remembrance of Kṛṣṇa, it’s less likely that danger will come to us. This is described in *Kṛṣṇa* book: “Such witches can play their black art only where there is no chanting or hearing of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. It is said that wherever the chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa is done, even negligently, all bad elements—witches, ghosts, and dangerous calamities—immediately disappear. And this is certainly true of the place where the chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa is done seriously—especially in Vṛndāvana when the Supreme Lord was personally present” (*Kṛṣṇa*, Vol. 1, Chap. 6, p. 43).

Kṛṣṇa is with me even when I forget Him. I know I am afraid of dangerous situations, but even more important than fear for my physical safety is my fear that I will forget Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, physical danger can be an impetus to remember His lotus feet. "It is quite natural for a devotee in danger to think of Kṛṣṇa because he has no other shelter. When a child is in danger, he takes shelter of his mother or father. Similarly, a devotee is always under the shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but when he specifically sees some danger, he remembers the Lord very rapidly" (*Kṛṣṇa*, Vol. 1, Chap. 6, p. 43).

Sometimes, though, I am afraid of coming closer to Kṛṣṇa because I have heard that He puts His devotees into danger just to help them remember Him. I know this is Kṛṣṇa's mercy, but still I am afraid. Therefore, let me become like a child. Avoiding His mercy will only bring mishap, especially the great danger of forgetting Him and falling into the lower species of life.

If I cannot pray like Queen Kuntī when she says, "I wish that all those calamities would happen again and again," at least I should be prepared for however Kṛṣṇa chooses to handle me. "My dear Lord, one who earnestly waits for You to bestow Your causeless mercy upon him, all the while patiently suffering the reactions of his past misdeeds and offering You respectful obeisances, with his heart, words, and body, is surely eligible for liberation, for it has become his rightful claim" (*Bhāg.* 10.14.8).

Is that why I don't surrender more, because I am afraid of being put into difficulty? I don't know what my disease is, except that I have many diseases. My reluctance seems causeless. I need Kṛṣṇa to help me.

The question is, “If the Supreme Self is the real object of our love, is it wrong to want to know and love yourself?” Of course, it’s easy to answer and say you can know yourself—you *must* know yourself—as an eternal servant of God. You love being His servant. They go together, self-realization and God consciousness. But it’s not so easy figuring it out. It’s relatively easy to get to know ourselves, but God seems harder to know. It’s easy to become selfish and fall into *māyā* and not care about God. I don’t know the answers to these questions. I haven’t come to write as a perfect speaker from a *vyāsāsana*. I want to ask, to think, to pray.

I think of my old college friend, Murray Mednick. I seem to remember that he became an atheist. Most of us were atheists in college. How could there be a God if He allowed the Jews to be killed by Hitler? Atheists not only don’t believe in God, they make it sound as if *no* intelligent person can believe. When you are trying to be an intellectual, you don’t want to be left behind. Therefore, you cite Sartre and Camus and call yourself an atheist.

I mention Murray to bring up the topic of friendship. A friend shouldn’t replace the need for God. Friendship in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is best because devotee friends help each other progress in *bhakti*. They chant and read and encourage each other to chant and read.

What if someone can’t take up *bhakti*? Does he remain our friend? It’s hard to imagine how he could. Friends reveal their minds to each other. In Kṛṣṇa conscious friendships, we share the same goal. We follow the four rules and we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Can devotee friendships be superficial? Yes, but that’s because for many devotees, determined Kṛṣṇa

consciousness is even more important than friendships. Friendship ought to follow in the wake of Kṛṣṇa conscious striving. We work together naturally to serve our spiritual master.



I have a relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa. It's demanding. It exhausts me sometimes. My relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa is my solace. I depend on Him. He's always there. He wants to know about me as a friend. I am trying to learn how to be with Him at all times, how to distinguish myself from His Self. He is great and I am small.

His existence does not threaten mine. He is simply the Lord. Pure devotees never forget Him. The tendency may be to seek seclusion and exclude Kṛṣṇa because He appears too demanding. Someone might say, "Give me only a distant relationship so I can be peaceful and know my self and tend to my own needs." We become enamored by ourselves and our possibilities. We have neglected ourselves; the world has bounced us around. Now we want to heal. We want to walk on the beach and feel the pleasant breeze and be at peace.

Thus we may think that taking care of ourselves separates us from God consciousness. This can be taken to such an extreme that we think there is only one impersonal self, and that we don't need to know God personally.

I don't believe that. I want Lord Kṛṣṇa to be present on my walk and in my thoughts. He and I and everyone and everything: "For one who sees Me everywhere and

sees everything in Me, I am never lost, nor is he ever lost to Me” (Bg. 6.30).

And: “By Me, in My unmanifested form, this entire universe is pervaded. All beings are in Me, but I am not in them” (Bg. 9.4).



Lord Śiva states that Lord Viṣṇu is “most peaceful, and because of Your self-illuminated existence, You are not disturbed by the six kinds of transformations” (*Bhāg.* 4.24.34). We need God. How foolish to think the self can stand alone. We are always disturbed, but Lord Viṣṇu is never disturbed. “Consequently, any conditioned soul within this material universe can remain completely perfect when he is under the protection of Vāsudeva, or when he is engaged in devotional service.” I want to feel these śāstric truths in my body.

Although I try to appreciate everything about Kṛṣṇa, certain of His qualities are my favorites. Still, I want to learn everything about Him in order to increase my appreciation of our relationship. My best friend is also the controller of the material elements. He is the integrating power. He holds the universes together, and in one of His expansions, He destroys everything at the time of annihilation. I have heard that when I reach the highest stages in my relationship with Kṛṣṇa, *yoga-māyā* will make me forget His greatness. But I’m not there yet. I need to hear whatever my spiritual master thinks is good for me. “One should not neglect to understand fully how great Kṛṣṇa is, for by knowing the greatness of Kṛṣṇa, one will be able to be fixed in sincere devotional service” (Bg. 10.7, purport).

Lord Śiva praises Kṛṣṇa's expansion, Aniruddha. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Not only does Lord Aniruddha help fruitive actors by elevating them to the higher planetary systems, but He also helps the devotee engage in devotional service by dint of His inexhaustible energy. Just as heat is the source of material energy, the inspiration of Lord Aniruddha is the energy by which one can engage in executing devotional service" (*Bhāg.* 4.24.37, purport).

This is what I pray for during the day: physical strength and mental energy. O Lord Aniruddha, please give me strength to praise the Lord and seek my relationship with Him in a tangible way. I can't do it without You. "Even though one may desire to engage in the service of the Lord, without sanction one cannot do so." (*Bhāg.* 4.24.37, purport).



A relationship with Kṛṣṇa means service to Him. I don't think of myself as His equal. I don't do Him a favor when I chant *japa*. I call out to be delivered from *māyā*. Please give me the shelter of offenseless chanting. Please control my mind. Give me the strength to chant. You have already given the chanting to us, Lord, but I am so fallen I need to ask You to allow me to chant. I am already going through the motions, but why not let me enter the internal energy of *harināma*? This is my request for a relationship with the holy name.



It's up to each of us. Kṛṣṇa is waiting. "As all surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly. Everyone follows My path in all respects, O son of Pṛthā" (Bg. 4.11). We already have a general, functional relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa. It can be compared to the relationship all citizens have with the king. The king is generous, kind, and he maintains everyone. But for his more intimate dealings, he is more selective in his relationships. Most conditioned souls don't want a personal relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, He doesn't force Himself on them. But those who want Him and who qualify become intimate with the Lord through personal dealings. "I envy no one, nor am I partial to anyone. I am equal to all. But whoever renders service unto Me in devotion is a friend, is in Me, and I am also a friend to him" (Bg. 9.29).



My Relationship With Lord Kṛṣṇa, #2

Tide is in or out? I don't know,
so many pebbles, walk close to the
water's edge and don't notice much.
Someone sleeping in a black tent. I can't
talk out loud. Go ahead anyway. They're
probably asleep, 6 A.M. Monday.

I encourage myself on the project,
"My Relationship With Kṛṣṇa."
"Don't quit," I say.
What about after these four days?
Then you can pause and see.

But go these days, maybe write a
great deal, do you think you can?
But I really don't know my relationship.
I only quote *śāstra* or talk
about it, but . . .
nothing really is
known to me. Kṛṣṇa doesn't reveal
those things very easily.
It may be another farce by me.

I have a relationship with my hurting ankle,
with the jacket I wear, with the people in
the black tent, with the seaweed and the
Atlantic Ocean and I'm entangled in the karma
which is poisoning the seas.
I am connected with
whatever goes on in the Navy or Army
or Marines and I have connections in
the White House. I read the newspaper
once a month and even if I didn't . . .
I'm connected to the earth.

Go ahead with your project, I tell myself.
It can be revealed to you while you write,
what you don't know now.
Trust writing. You have a relationship with
writing, with Kṛṣṇa in writing.
It's like *japa*.
And your *japa*, what can I say? Go...
on, keep trying, I'm with you.

He doesn't speak long, my encourager.
I'm alone in the house today, quieter.
A car passes me as I walk on the road and I imagine
he hits me and I am thrown down.
What is my relationship then?
Wet, gray world. House waits for
me to heat up cereal and milk.
Take a rest afterwards in bed with a
hot water bottle.
Then I want to see you sit for hours
with white paper and make
the relationship by writing.
Inquire into what exists.
If Kṛṣṇa wants, He'll tell you something.
Your duty is to write.



My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead. All glories to You! The Vedic literature praises Your glories, but it can never come to the limit of Your greatness. Other world religions also praise You. Only fools—those who think themselves God—and atheists do not praise You. The atheists think that the cosmic manifestation was created by chance, but nothing happens by chance. Everything is under Your control.

Dear Lord, I am dependent on the scriptures and on my spiritual master to tell me about You, yet each of us can know You by perception. We perceive our own consciousness, which is an expansion of the supreme consciousness. Our individual consciousness is ruled by a higher source, and that is You.

I am speaking these philosophical words just to fend off the atheist within me. But I wish to *approach* You, not just argue in favor of Your existence. The best kind of prayer is to ask for pure devotional service. O Lord Kṛṣṇa, O energy of the Lord, Harā, please engage me in Your service. I am already serving You, but now I ask to serve You in love. Please enlighten me. Make me more fit to serve You and not my own senses.

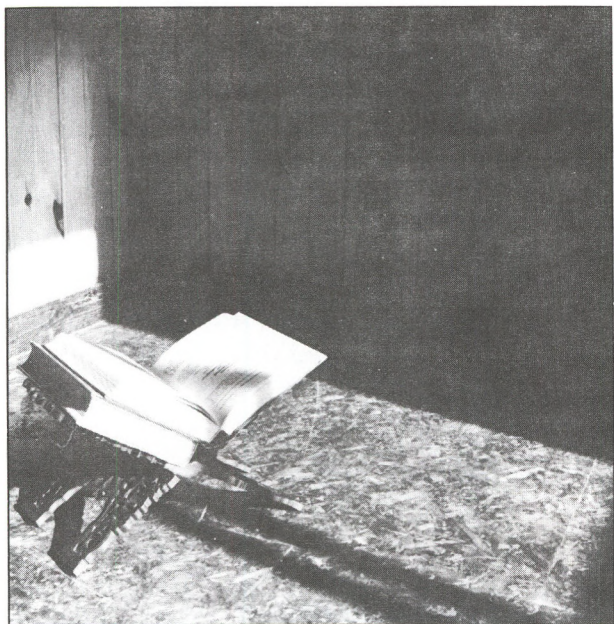
We are small. Therefore, we become stuck in our pitiful condition. We have heard of Your blissful nature and Your abode, but we are still somehow bound by the material body and the material concepts of fear, repulsion, attachment, and the desire to lord it over and enjoy this world. Will you release us from this entanglement? We cannot release ourselves.

Devotional service is the best boat for crossing the ocean of nescience, but I seem to be moving so slowly. I don't know how far I'll get before death comes. After death, I will no longer make progress in this body. I will have to pause for six months. If human life is next, I'll wake up in the womb. I don't know when again I will be so well situated, with my guru as the captain of the ship, my human body chanting and hearing, and the favorable winds of *śāstra* comprehensible to me. This is a rare opportunity for good sailing, but I am so slow.

Dear Kṛṣṇa, I pray to You to rescue me. I have read Your statement in *Bhagavad-gītā*, “. . . those who worship Me, giving up all their activities unto Me and being devoted to Me without deviation, engaged in devotional service and always meditating upon Me, having fixed their minds upon Me, O son of Pṛthā—for them I am the swift deliverer from the ocean of birth and death” (Bg. 12.6–7). You can deliver me, Lord. You say, “Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and that will attract Me,” so I do:

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare.

Dear Lord, You bring a devotee back to You provided he is fully engaged in Your devotional service. I ask you to adjust my own program so that it is more pleasing to You. I may not say these words with full sincerity, but I want to be sincere. If You make it clear to me what I have to do to please You, I could direct myself toward Your instruction and surrender. Please direct me, or at least inform me. You are *caitya-guru*, and I await Your order. My spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda, is already directing me, but I need strength to carry out his order. He approves that we turn to You for help.



My
Constitutional
Position

Day Three



A simple way to state the pursuit of this writing: I have a constitutional relationship with Kṛṣṇa. It already exists. It has always existed. I want to develop it and be accepted back in the spiritual world. *Bhakti* is the only way to attain Kṛṣṇa's mercy. Fortunately, I am engaged in *bhakti* (*guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja*). Now I want to activate that process so I can please Lord Kṛṣṇa as soon as possible and go back to Godhead, or at least be firmly fixed in serving Him in love in whatever lives I am destined to take in the material world. I pray for the impetus to improve and I reason with myself that at least my own attempt to please Kṛṣṇa is within my power, although I cannot force His mercy to descend.

✱

Our constitutional position is to take the holy name into our minds and onto our lips, even if we don't yet feel bliss. We are not chanting for an immediate

“high.” We are not using the chanting to pursue selfish, temporary interests. We chant to establish ourselves as the tiny servants of God. We chant because we have survived another night, and we want to live another day in devotional service. We chant because we will have to meet death sooner or later. We chant because we need to.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is His name. He is all-attractive. Kṛṣṇa is in the scriptures. “Thus established in the mode of unalloyed goodness, the man whose mind has been enlivened by contact with devotional service to the Lord gains positive scientific knowledge of the Personality of Godhead in the stage of liberation from all material association” (*Bhāg.* 1.2.20).

We’re not just creatures with so many bodily parts, whose minds reflect only the senses’ signals—“Is it too cold in here? Should I turn the heater on?” We are spirit soul.

We are not atheists or agnostics whose sharp minds cut down the impulse to turn to Kṛṣṇa. We go to the *śāstra* to change all that.

“Śrīmatī Kuntī said: O Kṛṣṇa, I offer my obeisances unto You because You are the original personality and are unaffected by the qualities of the material world. You are existing both within and without everything, yet You are invisible to all” (*Bhāg.* 1.8.18).

By some prayers, Kṛṣṇa comes into view. In other prayers, we gain faith in Kṛṣṇa by seeing His pure devotee approaching Him: “Thus he fixed his mind . . . in devotional service [*bhakti-yoga*] . . . thus he saw the Absolute Personality of Godhead . . . ” (*Bhāg.* 1.7.4).



If we develop our relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa, we will forget so-called friendship, society, and love. We want that forgetfulness. “Because he realizes that he is spirit and Kṛṣṇa is the supreme spirit, he knows that his intimate relationship should be with Kṛṣṇa, not with this body” (NOD, p. 32).

The Nectar of Devotion makes some important statements about having a relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa. First, it asserts that the relationship is based on spirit, not the body. As we go on hearing, we learn of the five relationships, or *rasas*, with Kṛṣṇa, and we hear of the intriguing services the pure devotees render for Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure in the spiritual world. We also learn that each of us has an eternal, specific relationship with Kṛṣṇa. We have a *rasa* with Him, but we don’t yet know what it is. We can learn of the details of our *rasa* only when we perfect our surrender to the Lord by following the orders of the spiritual master.

“When one realizes something of his constitutional relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he understands his original position and wants to be reinstated in this position, either as friend, servant, parent, or conjugal lover of Kṛṣṇa. That is called *lālasāmayī*, or very eagerly desiring to go to one’s natural position. This *lālasāmayī* stage of submission comes in the stage of perfect liberation, which is technically called *svarūpa-siddhi*, when the living entity understands, by perfect spiritual advancement and revelation, his original relationship with the Lord” (NOD, p. 81).

It’s natural that we should develop a desire to render direct service to Kṛṣṇa. What service will it be? That depends on our taste. How can we develop the taste? “One should feelingly pray and become eager to

render his particular type of service to the Lord. This is the teaching of all great devotees, especially Lord Caitanya" (NOD, p. 83).

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "In other words, one should learn how to cry for the Lord. One should learn this small technique, and he should be very eager and actually cry to become engaged in some particular type of service. This is called *laulyam*, and such tears are the price for the highest perfection. If one develops this *laulyam*, or excessive eagerness for meeting and serving the Lord in a particular way, that is the price to enter into the kingdom of God."

But lest we think this can be done quickly without paying for it, *The Nectar of Devotion* warns us of the pitfalls of desiring perfection prematurely:

No one should claim his eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa unless he is liberated. In the conditioned state of life, the devotees have to execute the prescribed duties as recommended in the codes of devotional service. When one is mature in devotional service and is a realized soul, he can know his own eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa. One should not artificially try to establish some relationship. In the premature stage, it is sometimes found that a lusty, conditioned person will artificially try to establish some relationship with Kṛṣṇa in conjugal love. The result of this is that one becomes *prākṛta-sahajiyā*, or one who takes everything very cheaply. Although such persons may be very anxious to establish a relationship with Kṛṣṇa in conjugal love, their conditioned life in the material world is still most abominable. A person who has actually established his relationship with Kṛṣṇa can no longer act on the material plane, and his personal character cannot be criticized

—NOD, pp. 316–7.

Regarding the rash desire to enter a perfect relationship with Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda said, “First deserve, then desire.”



Turn to Him, *turn* to Him. We don’t really need to have our minds completely jammed with sensory input. Our bodies function automatically. The heart beats, the breaths go on. We will survive or not survive, but we can keep our minds fixed on Kṛṣṇa. We don’t have to make a feverish effort to survive. Our survival is not in our power. All that’s in our power is to remain fixed on Kṛṣṇa or not.

“With mind fixed on Me, do your duty,” Kṛṣṇa says. I’m thinking of a verse, but can’t find it right away. What a treasure the *Bhagavad-gītā* is. Why can’t I spend more time with it? In the *Gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells us about Himself and our relationship with Him. Everyone should take to it, including me.

Lunch is late today. I’m more appreciative of it. God is *agni* in my stomach. That is also my relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa. Without fire in the stomach, we can’t digest food. Lord Kṛṣṇa is the source of that fire. I know this from the scripture. That’s a strength—that source of knowledge. It’s better than rumor or than my unreliable feelings or experiences. Kṛṣṇa is the fire in the stomach—the *Bhagavad-gītā* says so—and now I am experiencing what the *Bhagavad-gītā* says.

The *Gītā* says to offer our food to God before we eat, or we will be eating lumps of sin. This is an important way to relate to Kṛṣṇa since eating is so important to us. We can transform eating into devotion. Therefore, don’t eat for sense gratification.

I offer the food to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and he offers it to Lord Kṛṣṇa. *Śāstra* and Śrīla Prabhupāda guarantee my connection. Yes, I certainly do have a reliable connection and true relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa. May He reveal it to me as He desires, and may I increase my appreciation for it.

“Such knowledge in Kṛṣṇa consciousness can be achieved by a faithful person who believes firmly in Kṛṣṇa. . . . This faith is attained by the discharge of devotional service, and by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare” (Bg. 4.39, purport).



As long as we try to imitate or take Kṛṣṇa’s position, we cannot develop our constitutional relationship with Him. He is the supreme enjoyer, the *puruṣa*, and we are *prakṛti*. We are meant for the Lord’s enjoyment.

Śrīla Prabhupāda elaborated on this point in a 1972 lecture in Los Angeles: “Here [in the material world] the *puruṣa* is imitation. One who is playing the part of *puruṣa*, enjoyer, he is not actually *puruṣa*, but he is *prakṛti*. Falsely he is representing himself. Therefore, we have got trouble. Just like if a woman dresses like a man . . . similarly, here in the material world we are falsely dressed with the material body, imitating Kṛṣṇa, the enjoyer. . . . Here the living entity, either dressed in male or female dress . . . his body is a dress . . . none of them are male, both of them are originally female, *prakṛti*” (Lecture, June 18, 1972, on *Bhāg.* 2.3.21).

In how many ways do we strut as *puruṣa*—trying to be the lover, the master, the creator-artist, the superior energy? Every time we act like that, we cut off our lov-

ing relationship with Kṛṣṇa. We act as Rāvaṇa and try to steal Sitā. We fall on our faces. We set ourselves up only to be cut down by the real enjoyer.

I want to understand what it means to be *prakṛti*. This has nothing to do with material sexuality. The real meaning is submission and service. Any devotee who has attained liberation has had to understand his or her constitutional position—whether they are Kṛṣṇa's elders, friends, *gopīs*, or cows, they have all had to become submissive to Kṛṣṇa's pleasure.



Lord Kṛṣṇa is more clever than I am. He is more witty, a true humorist. He is deepest in prayer and quickest in action. His will cannot be contradicted. He can move my heart. He looks for devotion and reciprocates.

Śrīla Prabhupāda describes our position. Śrīla Prabhupāda knows why we suffer and how we can be saved. We have to follow him in prayer and philosophy and life. We have to make his mission our mission. Does he want us to practice rules for purification? Does he want us to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa regularly and hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*? Then do it. He also wants us to preach, to spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, and to cooperate with his other disciples.



Illness and reverses can bring us closer to Kṛṣṇa. "When such impediments arise he should simply think of Kṛṣṇa and expect His mercy. That is the only solace. If the devotee passes his days in that spirit, it is certain

that he is going to be promoted to the abode of the Lord” (NOD, p. 91). Reverses work in our favor. We execute Kṛṣṇa consciousness despite the tribulations.

I feel I have had to face very few tribulations in my life, but I write this down as another way to improve my relationship with Kṛṣṇa. I have seen other devotees endure up to death in this spirit. Their friends are impressed with their Kṛṣṇa conscious attitudes and their way of seeing the good in their material misfortune. The scriptures come to life when spoken by a devotee dying of cancer. According to the *sāstra*, it is predicted that ill fortune will bring surrender into a practicing devotee’s life, but everyone is surprised and awed at the appearance of this dividend in a time of need.

What *about* the time of death? Do I anticipate it will increase *my* relationship with Kṛṣṇa? That’s what happened to Mahārāja Parikṣit, who spent his last week hearing *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. “. . . one must be very fortunate to hear about *kṛṣṇa-kathā* seriously, like Mahārāja Parikṣit. He was especially intent on the subject matter because he was expecting death at any moment” (*Kṛṣṇa*, Introduction, p. xxiv).

We don’t dare claim that we will certainly rise to the occasion at death, but we should hope for it. It will be our last chance for improvement in this lifetime. “O my Lord, powerful as fire, omnipotent one, now I offer You all obeisances and fall on the ground at Your feet. O my Lord, please lead me on the right path to reach You, and since You know all that I have done in the past, please free me from the reactions to my past sins so that there will be no hindrance to my progress” (*Śrī Īśopaniṣad*, Mantra 18).

I hope to die thinking of Kṛṣṇa. I want to be praying to be with Him. I hope to attain Him even if I did not

attain Him during my life. “And whoever, at the end of his life, quits the body, remembering Me alone, at once attains My nature. Of this there is no doubt. Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body, O son of Kuntī, that state he will attain without fail” (Bg. 8.5–6).

It’s not likely we will remember Kṛṣṇa at death if we have been forgetful throughout life. It’s possible, but we run a risk if we think like that. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “One cannot suddenly remember the Supreme Lord at death; one must have practiced some yoga system, especially the system of *bhakti-yoga*. Since one’s mind at death is very disturbed, one should practice transcendence through yoga during one’s life” (Bg. 8.10, purport).



One definition of preliminary faith (*śraddhā*) is the confidence that “if I could surrender to devotional service, I’m convinced that I could attain all perfection.” I love to contemplate the goal of *bhakti*. It satisfies me intellectually and theologically. I will defend it as superior to all other goals. It is the *puruṣārtha*. Unfortunately, I am not burning with desire to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness or to attain my *svarūpa*, but I do have a flame of conviction for those activities, and I hope to increase my flame, while protecting it from the drafts of unfaithfulness.

Here is the verse spoken by Lord Kṛṣṇa which conveys assurance to practitioners like me: “A person who accepts the path of devotional service is not bereft of the results derived from studying the *Vedas*, performing austere sacrifices, giving charity, or pursuing philo-

sophical and fruitive activities. Simply by performing devotional service, he attains all these, and at the end he reaches the supreme eternal abode” (Bg. 8.28).



Lord Śiva praises the efficacy of *bhakti*. *Varṇāśrama-dharma* is not enough; it needs to be engaged as *bhakti*. Similarly, for meditation, the goal is the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord. Śrīla Prabhupāda says that this topmost meditation “will help him not only to see the Lord within constantly but to see Him face to face and become His associate in Vaikuṇṭhaloka or Goloka Vṛndāvana” (*Bhāg.* 4.24.53, purport).

It is very difficult even for the king of heaven to attain, or for those who identify themselves as one with God, yet it is easily attained by *bhakti*. What is that? A relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa. It can’t be known by the blunt senses or impersonal meditation, not by faithlessness, or by those who desire to lord it over. But Kṛṣṇa says *bhaktyā mām abhijānāti*: “One can understand Me as I am, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, only by devotional service” (Bg. 18.55).

If someone says, “Yes, this is the conclusion of the *bhakti-sāstras*, but there are other scriptures and other conclusions,” then I say, “Good. Have those other conclusions if you want them. Reason shows *bhakti* as the topmost goal. Would you rather rot in the material world? Merge into the Brahman light? Then we cannot tell you the intimate glories of *bhakti*.”

“My dear Lord, pure devotional service is even difficult for liberated persons to discharge, but devotional service alone can satisfy You. Who will take to other

processes of self-realization if he is actually serious about the perfection of life?” (*Bhāg.* 4.24.55).

In *The Nectar of Devotion*, Chapter 14, Śrīla Prabhupāda says that knowledge and renunciation are not necessary for devotional service. “It requires nothing more than sincerity.” Lord Kṛṣṇa and the process of approaching Him, devotional service, are both absolute. Make a sincere attempt to serve the Lord and you have attained a true relationship with Him. If a person developing Kṛṣṇa consciousness still has some material attachments, they will fall away as he regularly discharges devotional service. Devotional service is so powerful that if one executes even only one of the nine different kinds of *bhakti*, he can achieve the desired goal—being established in devotional service.

Therefore, it’s significant to me that I should consider my writing life while thinking about my relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa. My service to the Lord and my sense of self are very much wrapped up in the business of being a writer. I remember one writer asking herself whether she was willing to give up writing if, in exchange she could see her guru again after his departure from the world. She told herself, yes, she could do it and still live an enlightened, awakened life without writing. Intellectually, she then reasoned that it might be possible to do both, write and be with her guru. When tested, though, she was willing to give up her beloved writing practice. How do I face that test?

Are we more attached to our particular services or work in this world than to Kṛṣṇa? That seems to be part of the subject of this book. In my case, I want Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda to accept my writing as service to them. I have a file of letters from devotees who say my writing has helped them. Am I hoping the file will

impress the Lord? Is He smiling at me the way He smiled at Arjuna at the beginning of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, “You are speaking learned words, but you do not know . . . ” Is He about to give me a slap?

Anyway, I think of myself as a writer-servant, but if Kṛṣṇa wants to change my designation, then I can still chant and pray and honor *prasādam* and learn humility and whatever else He wants to teach me. I don’t insist on being a writer as an independent identity. No, not that.

I feel a liberating energy in writing honestly. Is that my false ego? Maybe. I hope my false ego will dissolve as I write. I hope this service will purify me.

Kṛṣṇa is the ability in man. He is the intelligence by which I can write. He gives the brain and hand, the ink and paper, and He gives the only worthy subject matter, the practice of devotional service to Him.



My Relationship With Lord Kṛṣṇa, #3

Your literary relationship with the literary Lord Kṛṣṇa of your literary imagination is one kind of reality. There is the literary incarnation of God in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. There is Kṛṣṇa appearing in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purports—that’s not mere literature but *kṛṣṇa-upadeśa*. And the Lord is in His holy names. Take your pick which Kṛṣṇa you want to relate to. He appears as Nṛsimhadeva to the demon, as Kṛṣṇa to Rādhā,

take your pick. I'll take what Śrīla
Prabhupāda gives us, *raso vai sah*,
Kṛṣṇa as source of all *rasas*, in all
cantos. Kṛṣṇa in the sun and moon and
wind, Kṛṣṇa in silence, in the
cheating of cheats, as Lord Buddha,
whatever Śrīla Prabhupāda says.
I can relate to that.

I am Kṛṣṇa's, Kṛṣṇa is mine.
Have you heard that before?
It's Vedic truth. I belong to Him because
He owns everything, me included.
And He is mine when I love Him.
"My Lord," said Prahlāda, and He
is my Lord too.
How is it some people find such ease
in saying it and others find it
impossible to say—*I love Kṛṣṇa*?
What kind of a devotee am I?

I can relate to Kṛṣṇa
when He kills Aghāsura inside his mouth
and when He comes out and absorbs
the soul of Agha
and when I walk alone and see flowers
and when I don't want to see people.
I see Kṛṣṇa in all things and in myself.
I want to see Him where He wants me
to see Him, in innocent conditioned souls.
Give them a chance, the Lord is in their heart.

See Him there, an opportunity to preach,
maybe in a ferry crowd. Just by wearing my
dhotī and shaving my head I relate to Lord Kṛṣṇa and
people see I am His.

He is mine, He comes to me and
lets me write. O Kṛṣṇa, please be mine
in the holy names chanted with devotion.
Please give me the desire I lack
to cry out to You.

Please give me my taste for loving You.
As the years go by I'm almost forgetting
what my spiritual master was like. Please save me.
Give me back my eternal relationship,
sweet Lord of the universe,
scourge of the universe.
Let me relate to You.



For me, God is not only an interesting subject to write about. He is the Lord of my life, protecting me in the world where there is danger at every step. I sought God out in other traditions even after coming to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, because I wanted to see Him and hear how others were finding Him. Finally I returned to the *bhāgavata* tradition. I want to be true and chaste to this one.

Everyone but the destroyer of the animals and the killer of the soul will like to hear about Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Those who are already perfect, those who want to be perfect, and those wallowing in sense gratification will all find His pastimes attractive. Therefore, we should develop our relationship with Him through hearing from the *Bhāgavatam*.

“As soon as one attentively and submissively hears the message of *Bhāgavatam*, by this culture of knowledge the Supreme Lord is established within his heart” (*Bhāg.* 1.1.2).

Hiraṇyakaśipu tauntingly asked Prahlaḍa, “Tell me about Kṛṣṇa.” Prahlaḍa replied, “It is not possible for someone like you, with uncontrolled senses, to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, either if you try alone, with a teacher, or in a group. Unless you receive the mercy of the spiritual master, it cannot be awakened and developed.”

On the order of our spiritual master, we hear the *Bhāgavatam* and Kṛṣṇa comes to us. “Persons who hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* regularly and are always taking the matter very seriously will have the Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa manifested in their hearts within a short time” (*Bhāg.* 2.8.4).

If Lord Kṛṣṇa appears in our lives, then the relationship is defined, and we don’t have to speculate. We will become His loving servants. Dhruva Mahārāja wanted a relationship with Kṛṣṇa in order to attain a kingdom. That means he didn’t know Kṛṣṇa or his actual relationship with Him. But when, by dint of his austerities, he saw Lord Viṣṇu, his relationship was consummated. Dhruva said, “I don’t want anything. I am satisfied simply by seeing You.”

We may think our relationship with Kṛṣṇa is lacking. We may even analyze the problem. But when the sun of Kṛṣṇa rises, all our dark doubts will vanish. We will never consider them again. “*Tat śṛṇu*, now hear, O son of Pṛthā, how by practicing yoga in full consciousness of Me, with mind attached to Me, you can know Me in full, free from doubt” (*Bg.* 7.1).

Vaidhī-bhakti means serving Kṛṣṇa even when we don’t feel spontaneous love. This kind of regulative

service is not as pleasing to Kṛṣṇa as *rāgānugā-bhakti*, yet it is recommended because it leads to *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

We practice *vaidhī-bhakti* with our senses. Śrīla Prabhupāda describes in his purport to *Bhagavad-gītā* 12.9 that in the performance of *vaidhī-bhakti*, we rise early, bathe, enter the temple, offer prayers and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, collect flowers and offer them to the Deity, hear *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*—all under the guidance of the spiritual master. We also perform our prescribed duties as service to Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda encourages us to think, “I have been appointed to discharge this particular duty by Kṛṣṇa.” Then we will naturally think of Kṛṣṇa.

But it’s not that we can perform just any work. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “One should, however, note that after doing something whimsically he should not offer the result to the Supreme Lord. That sort of duty is not in the devotional service of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One should act according to the order of Kṛṣṇa. This is a very important point. That order of Kṛṣṇa comes through the disciplic succession from the bona fide spiritual master” (Bg. 18.57, purport).

“No conditioned soul actually knows what is to be done and what is not to be done, but a person who acts in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is free to act because everything is prompted by Kṛṣṇa from within and confirmed by the spiritual master” (Bg. 18.58, purport).

How to free ourselves of complacency? Why don’t we *want* Kṛṣṇa more in our lives? Why do we feel uncomfortable even asking that question? Because it’s too hard to surrender. We would like to know Kṛṣṇa, but we can’t pay the price of *lauḷyam* (the greed to attain Him). If we were to ask a pure *bhakta*, “Could you tell me how I could have a more intense and loving

relationship with the Supreme Lord,” he’s liable to make demands on us that we can’t accept. We can’t do what it takes.

Imagine we once went to an officer training school in the military. And imagine we failed. That happened to me. I didn’t fail because of my grades; I failed because I didn’t want to go back for the second term. If someone were to ask, “Why don’t you become an officer,” it will remind me of that bitter failure or distaste. It’s a crude analogy, but let’s use it for a start.

Do we associate the notion of attaining Kṛṣṇa with something too difficult to achieve? If so, the thought of surrender produces feelings of failure and crushing humiliation. It’s too uncomfortable to even think about. We would rather be accepted and honored.

We shouldn’t confuse the issues and hide our failure. Attaining Kṛṣṇa consciousness is done by softening the heart, not by hardening it. We don’t have to compete with anyone else, and we cannot be cajoled into pure devotion. It’s something we have to want to do on our own. Furthermore, there is no failure—whatever we do in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is to our eternal benefit.

It’s also a fact, however, that we shouldn’t try for something beyond our reach. If a young man prematurely takes *sannyāsa*, he will shame himself. It’s better to take the slow and steady route, staying firmly fixed on the *bhakti-mārga* and not to waste time.

“My dear Arjuna, O winner of wealth, if you cannot fix your mind upon Me without deviation, then follow the regulative principles of *bhakti-yoga*. In this way develop a desire to attain Me” (Bg. 12.9).

If you can’t distribute books, then preach in another way. Do something that takes courage, but is

possible for you. Show Kṛṣṇa your earnestness, and He will remove the obstacles on the path.

“In the beginning of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one may not fully discharge the injunctions of the Lord, but because one is not resentful of this principle and works sincerely without consideration of defeat and hopelessness, he will surely be promoted to the stage of pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness” (Bg. 3.31, purport).



Am I still at the beginning of Kṛṣṇa consciousness after all these years, my youth and middle age spent, and still unable to fully discharge the Lord's injunctions?

Yes, and it's embarrassing. I feel like a grown man having to sit at a child's desk in the lower grades of public school. I'm a left-back. At the same time, I act as if I am advanced and senior.

I look out the window and see the sheep grazing in the meadow. They can't think of Kṛṣṇa or practice devotional service. All they do is eat, sleep, mate, and defend. They wear warm coats against the blustery winds. They are helpless, fearful creatures. In the end, they are slaughtered.

I pace back and forth and chant *japa*. Is this the paradise that souls can aspire for when they evolve from sheep to human, or from materialist to disciple of the pure devotee? We have to live our lives with humility. Our lives are auspicious.

We are fortunate to live in houses, eat cooked food, wear warm clothes, and especially to be able to chant the holy name, but, like the sheep, our time is limited.

Death is coming for us, too. Our only advantage is that we can cry out for loving service to Kṛṣṇa.

Nondevotees challenge, “Can you see Kṛṣṇa?” I know how to answer that because I have heard Śrīla Prabhupāda’s replies. Yes, I can see Kṛṣṇa at every moment and so can you. Can’t you see the sun? The sun is Kṛṣṇa’s eye. Do you know the taste of water? That is Kṛṣṇa? How can you *not* see Kṛṣṇa?

Or, Śrīla Prabhupāda pointed to a picture of Kṛṣṇa and said that that was seeing Kṛṣṇa.

Or, he said hearing Kṛṣṇa in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is just as good as seeing. “Why do you insist on seeing with these nonsense eyes?” Hearing is a better way to perceive Kṛṣṇa.

I know tactful and Kṛṣṇa conscious replies to give to those challengers, but when I am alone, I ask myself the same questions in private: “Do I see Kṛṣṇa?”

Yes—and no. I see Him with the eyes of scriptures. I see Him in the natural elements. I believe He is His name and present in the recitation of His pastimes. But I don’t have a spiritual body by which I can be with Him in His *līlā*. Or rather, I have a spiritual body, but it’s covered. As I said, I’m a left-back. It’s serious. There doesn’t seem to be anything total and radical I can do to change it.

Writing about my relationship with Him is nice, but my relationship with Him exists whether or not I articulate it. This writing is making it clearer to me that I do have a living relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It’s not that, until Kṛṣṇa touches me on the head with His conchshell, as He touched Dhruva Mahārāja, I have no relationship at all. He is always with me. To the receptive devotee, Kṛṣṇa’s presence in *śravaṇam-kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ-smaraṇam*,

etc., is just as good as seeing Kṛṣṇa face to face. Śrīla Prabhupāda's encouragement to us to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness through the *bhakti* process is itself a source of association with Kṛṣṇa.

"Now we have got so many books. So whenever you find time, you must find time . . . So read all these books, or chant. But when you are hungry, take *prasādam*. When you are sleepy, take a nap, not very much, just to refresh. And go on, either chanting on the beads, reading the books, or talking about Kṛṣṇa, in this way always remain in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. *Smartavyaḥ satato viṣṇuḥ*. Kṛṣṇa consciousness means to remember Viṣṇu always, twenty-four hours a day, some way or other. Type for Kṛṣṇa, write for Kṛṣṇa, go outside for Kṛṣṇa, *saṅkīrtana* party, sell books for Kṛṣṇa, bring money for Kṛṣṇa, spend for Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa, that's all. Everything Kṛṣṇa, this is Kṛṣṇa consciousness" (Lecture, May 31, 1972, on *Bhāg.* 2.3.14-5).



What does my relationship with Kṛṣṇa constitute right now? I am active. I work for Him. I am practicing the *Bhagavad-gītā* verse, *yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi* (9.27), "Whatever you do, do it for Me." Some call this *karmayoga*, where the devotee first decides what he wants to do and then renders it as service to Kṛṣṇa. They say that spirit of working for Kṛṣṇa is not on the same standard of full surrender in pure devotion as Kṛṣṇa requests in verse 18.66, "Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me." But one stage will lead to the next.

I am not on my deathbed. I'm active. What is my relationship with Kṛṣṇa? I live in Him, and He sustains

me along with all creatures (*eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān*). I work for Him, I chant on my beads, I follow the vows I made to Śrīla Prabhupāda. I am active and I produce results. I am grateful that I can contribute to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, that I am protected by Kṛṣṇa, and that I have knowledge of the ultimate goal. My sense of gratitude is predominant in my relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa.



Evening Poem About Kṛṣṇa

Oh no, I think, I can't make one of
those poems like the Alvars,
describing the Lord's pastimes from *śāstra*,
what the temple Deity looks like.
To become poetry they need to be
infused with simple devotion and
song-desire.
I don't have that,
only
I wish to write . . . What do I mean?

Kṛṣṇa is the God of gods.
He's Acyuta, He's Śyāmasundara,
His devotees in Vṛndāvana smile at
Mother Yaśodā who cannot punish
her child when they complain
that He steals their butter.

Lord of all, Yamarāja's just His servant,
and all demigods wait to see Him
in the outer room at Dvārakā.
His wives,
He thinks of the *gopīs* He left
in Vṛndāvana—I can't touch
that because I'm an only-aspiring-to-be-reverential
ex-sinner.

I can praise, I can rephrase,
I mean good.
Let me not be a lazy man but
make effort for good always against
the encroaching dark.
Kṛṣṇa, please let me be Your
poet and writer. I'm not satisfied
to tell of a little life bereft of You.
What good are my stories and
poems without You and
I mean You in the center
as Nārada told Vyāsa—
it is abominable to write
and not teach people Kṛṣṇa is the
main delight, live for Him, hear
His heroics,
and if you are too
tired and feeble to evoke it,
then simply pray, "My Lord, I could not do.
My Lord, I will try."



*Speaking
to Kṛṣṇa*

Day Four



Dear Lord, if this were a ship's log, I'd write, "May 27, stuck in the water." I have hit a block in this writing. I needn't explain it here. But how could I have come to the end of this topic?

Obviously, I haven't. Yesterday I wrote myself this note: "The questions/topics of complacency in the relationship—fear of even wanting to know what is lacking or fear of coming close to Him, are to be approached again once a day, even if gently and without conclusion." This indicates that there is still good material to write about. Maybe I don't like feeling confined by the topic. It seems to exclude other topics.

It can be intimidating. You are everything, and I want to acknowledge that. You are more important than I am, but sometimes it appears in my writing that I am more important. I am trying to approach You in the only way I know, through the self. The self reads *śāstra*, hears from guru, and tries to assimilate it. But, yes, You

are *vibhu* and I am *anu*. You are first and I am last. I am Your eternal servant.

Why don't I surrender to You? I don't know.

My dear Lord, as I write, I hear M. downstairs clearing his throat. It's a signal for me to go on writing. My tugboat of writing desire sails through the black waters. My lights are on, and the engine is running smoothly. You are with me as the ship's eyes and as the eyes in my head.

I can't force You to appear in my writing. Maybe I don't have a strong enough desire to know You and I want to hide that fact from myself. I just heard Śrīla Prabhupāda say how someone could be stifled by remaining in the mode of goodness. Such a person might think, "I am a very learned man. I know what is Brahman. My life is quiet and peaceful." He doesn't feel the need to go further and surrender to You. Since surrender to You is the only way to be liberated from birth and death, the man in goodness remains bound.

You are present in my life, but not enough. I should love You and see You everywhere. I should feel the whole world void in Your absence. I say, "I should," but what do I feel in my gut? Do I want You? Right now as I ask myself this, I think, "I don't seem to want it so badly, not in terms of having to make a radical break from my present activities. I have my writing service, and my traveling to lecture in temples. I have Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and tapes and the concept of following him exclusively. I know about preaching, and I am trying to preach in my own way. I know about going back to Godhead and the likelihood that I may not make it in this lifetime. I know that the best prayer is, 'Please let me be born in the association of pure devotees so I can render service to Lord Kṛṣṇa.' I don't seem to be able

to do something different, although I'm aware that I fall far short of pure devotion. If Kṛṣṇa wants to change me, He will."

I write quickly, as if to outdistance my own thoughts, but I am willing to stop and reassess. Still, my prayer continues, the prayer that You Yourself have allowed and ignited. I pray the prayer my spiritual master gave me, my strong, unflinching master who called me to him and who still teaches me the way. I fail to be the best I can be, but still I try. All your followers try to serve you, Śrīla Prabhupāda. You say, "Serve Kṛṣṇa, worship Him, save the people—they are dying!—by giving them the chance to hear about Kṛṣṇa."

My dear Lord, I am traveling to various temples and trying to live a *sannyāsī's* life. May something I write help the faith of another soul. Can this too be preaching on Lord Caitanya's order?



Dear Lord, I have the morning free to write, but words don't come easily. It's responsible work to speak to You. I know You are as much a person as I am, so You can understand if I talk to You in writing. I know You won't be offended if I try.

Sometimes devotees tell me they intend to write me letters, but because they are afraid their expression will be inadequate, they don't write at all. I tell them it's better to write, even if the letter is faulty—I won't hold it against them. None of us are perfect. I tell them it's better that they write and stay in touch. How else can we be friends and share Kṛṣṇa consciousness? But I know why they stay silent.

We make excuses, dear Lord, why we don't communicate with You. I wonder, though, if our motives are always so innocent. There are times when we want to continue our plans unhampered by surrender to Your will. As soon as we communicate with You, our cherished attachments are liable to be smashed. Therefore, we hide from You. We don't turn to You.

My dear Lord, it's also amazing how we don't think we're going to die. Therefore, we don't glorify You. We forget You. We don't try to become Your dearmost devotee. We go along, wasting time. The nondevotees are colossal time-wasters. They spend their leisure in sports or frivolities or in damaging enjoyments. Those who have to work hard and who have no time for leisure spend their time envying those who do.

Aspiring devotees often waste time in sleep. They know that the goal of life is to surrender to You, but they remain complacent, practicing a token form of religious life.

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, I have brought up most of the topics I could think of regarding my relationship with You. I speculated whether I will wholeheartedly turn to You at death. I claimed that I am following the verse, *yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi*. I said other things, too. I admitted I was afraid to come close to You because I am afraid You might ask me to renounce things that are dear to me. I repeated in my own words what the scriptures say about You, Your devotees, and those who seek qualitative oneness with You.

Dear Lord, You give us the intelligence to approach You. You like to be surrounded by liberated devotees, and You take pleasure and interest when a soul comes to You. I want to say more. I want to make inroads in my understanding, and I want to approach You so I

can worship You. I want to always think of You and never forget You. I never want to lose my connection with You, no matter what condition of life I am in. You are my all in all.



In an hour I will go for a walk to the promontory fort. It's not really a fort, but a cliff jutting out into the ocean where long ago a fort once existed. There I will seek my relationship with You. My tendency is to belittle myself. I tell myself I am not interested in finding You. I tell myself that I am going to chant my rounds by the sea just to get the quota done. I tell myself that I am like a Romantic poet, a Shelley or a Byron, speaking poetic words into the air, instead of trying to please You.

But it's not really true. I *do* have a grain of sincerity. I *can* go to the cliff and seek You. You are my best friend. Śrīla Prabhupāda will be pleased if I can speak my heart to You and chant with attention.

Kṛṣṇa, You know my mind and heart. You even know things about me that I don't know. You know how bad I am and how good I am. You withhold information from me about myself, as well as about You. I trust You know what is best for me, but still I call out to You. I don't want to be complacent and think that I have done everything I could and that there is nothing left for me to do to approach You. I plead my case before You. Please give me the strength to please You. I would like to be a more useful instrument for Śrīla Prabhupāda. I would like to be able to chant and preach and not seek honor.

Dear Lord, it seems that my main purpose in coming here is to seek You. I know preachers are supposed to be interested in rescuing the fallen souls. Once a devotee wrote to Śrīla Prabhupāda that New York City is uninhabitable for humans. Śrīla Prabhupāda replied: "A devotee is satisfied whether in Vaikuṇṭha or in hell. His satisfaction is not the particular place, but his sincere service attitude toward Kṛṣṇa."

I am here, and I want to make it meaningful. Therefore, I am looking for You even here. I am alone today. When I am alone, I am able to be more thoughtful. I can drop the unnecessary burdens of controversies and other dealings. I can give You my attention. Let me call for You from this promontory rock.

✧

O holy name, You let me walk with You, although I am unworthy and my mind blows me about like a straw on a windy beach. Nevertheless, You anchor me with Your mercy. Please fix my mind like a lamp in a windless place. I am always Your servant, although I am so unworthy now that I sometimes feel ashamed to come before You. I come because Śrīla Prabhupāda insists I pray to You. You are my best friend and the most merciful form of Kṛṣṇa.

You are everywhere. I have a relationship with You which is full of eternity, knowledge, and bliss. My mother, the *Vedas*, assures me of Your mercy; therefore, I am her dependent and affectionate child. O Mā, tell me a story. O Mother, show me the way.

✧

When I arrived at the rock, I had to chase two horned sheep away. They were afraid of me. The water sloshes around the sharp, jagged rocks. I am alone, I think, with some gulls and other creatures unbeknownst to me. I hear what sounds like a low *japa* uttering. Maybe it's just my frame of mind.

Dear Lord, what does it mean to seek You? You have found me out wherever I go. You are best found in the direct places where You appear fully—in *harināma*, in scripture, in the hearts and words of Your pure devotees, in the *arcā-vigraha*, in special places like Vṛndāvana and Māyāpur. Here, I may feel separation from Rādhā-Śyāma, just as an American immigrant might think back to this pretty shore where I am sitting, facing east.

Why do I seek You out? You are already in my heart. You are Kṛṣṇa. You are in my self. I don't mean that I have attained You, but my very self, that which is most precious and individual, is not apart from You. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that I am a sample of God, a tiny spark of the whole. I seek to be joined with my beloved Supreme Lord. That is my desire, even if I can't express it properly.

There is water all around. I think of death by drowning, death by being dashed against the rocks. Delicate bodies die. The sun is rising behind the mountain, and I see streaks and layers of blue clouds. The sun, like pure gold, is rising. This is Your universal form.

I have my black thorn stick in case a seal comes up suddenly, or the rocks suddenly materialize into some threatening form. My body feels chilled. Let me not stay here where I don't belong. I sought You and found You. Now I will go back to the house, walking and chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. I'll find You as I

enter the door of the house and chat with my friend. I'll find You upstairs when I am alone again. I'll find You when I bow before Śrīla Prabhupāda and offer him breakfast. I'll find You all day, as the hours go by and I continue to write.



Dear Lord, my sister's cheerleader friend, Irene Grant, must be about sixty years old by now, and her younger sister, Linda, is almost fifty. I pray to forget them. Let those memories wash away.

One day I will forget the false ego and assume my place in the spiritual world. Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged us to work now as a disciple of our spiritual master. He said that was sufficient spiritual identity for now. He also told us to be humble. Humility is the perfect behavior for the soul. I am trying. I cook in the kitchen and realize bliss. I work at this writing and feel inspired by the opportunity to speak in *paramparā*. I am not looking for prizes. My dear Lord, I want only humility and eyes anointed with the salve of love.

What do I want to remember? I want to remember Your lifting Govardhana Hill and how the rains were coming down in sheets, sent by angry Indra. He was trying to kill the residents of Vṛndāvana because they followed the advice of their "talkative little friend." I want to remember how You defeated him.

I also want to remember how You forcibly took Sudama's chipped rice offering. Sudama was thin and poor, and You were the king. You seated Sudama in a place of honor and washed his feet with Your own hands. I want to think of Sudama's embarrassment at that moment, but how he was obedient to Your desire.

Of course, he was transformed by ecstasy just to be in Your presence. I want to keep that picture in my heart.

I want to remember Your beheading Dantavakra after You demolished Śālva's mystic airplane. We hear from the *ācāryas* that after that, You made a quick, confidential visit back to Vṛndāvana.

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, Your pastimes are confidential. Can I become worthy to hear them? You are partial to Your devotees. Therefore, I pray to become Your devotee so I may relish Your transcendental pastimes. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "If anyone wants to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he has to take to pure devotional service under the guidance of a pure devotee. Otherwise, the truth of the Supreme Personality of Godhead will always be hidden. . . . Only one who is actually engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and devotional service can understand what Kṛṣṇa is" (Bg. 18.55, purport).

*

My Relationship With Lord Kṛṣṇa, #4

My own words for Kṛṣṇa.
I am a boy who never heard of
You. Some blue profile on a
paperback *Bhagavad-gītā* translated by
impersonalists. Then I
learned Kṛṣṇa is actually God,
is actually a person, has
eternal pastimes enacted on the earth
5,000 years ago. I heard from
the Swami, Bhaktivedanta Swami,
Prabhupāda, of Kṛṣṇa the Supreme
who killed demons and spoke
Bhagavad-gītā to Arjuna . . .

My soul was opened on First Street
in my apartment. I offered
tomato slices on stiff *capātīs* to Lord Kṛṣṇa by saying
prayers taught to me by Swamiji.
Chanted on red beads.
Typed his manuscripts, "Our dear
typist," he called me. Steve,
Satsvarūpa, who gave
his little money. That was sheer mercy
that some intelligence in me or instinct
said certainly, go ahead and do this,
promise your whole life you'll chant Hare Kṛṣṇa,
promise you'll never have illicit sex, do it,
promise no meat or drugs, no marijuana
or LSD. You want to get rid of these
things but never dreamed such power
could come for goodness and in
such an unforeseen way, India and
Swami right here on the Lower East Side.
Take it. Don't wait for anyone you
know to agree or approve. They won't.
But you go. You're alone anyway,
so who cares? Take care of your soul—
go to the Swami. And he accepted me as a father
takes a new-found son, another.

Kṛṣṇa, I was so foolish (and I still am)
I thought You were . . . I accept You as God.
I like the idea, the fact, that You are a
cowherd boy with
names like Govinda and Gopāla.
I like the red beads, the hot rice and *dāl*,
the way he cooked.
Our Swami, spiritual master, self-realized,
pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa.

So much to learn
from him, Lord Caitanya,
gopīs,
Godbrothers,
preaching expectations, *guru-dakṣiṇā*.

And he brought us into his own life,
writing to him in San Francisco,
losing the money he entrusted to us,
seeing him go back to India,
writing to him in Vṛndāvana,
going to Boston on his wish.
Serving him still in separation.
Let me be here this time and all
the years together. I don't
need another.

My relationship with Kṛṣṇa began with his
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and chanting and *prasādam*.
What I learned then is the bedrock of my faith,
true, fixed, "It is such a nice thing."

I ask You,
make me true in serving You
always. What Swamiji said in books
like *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*—will all
come true one day. We will meet in the spiritual sky,
in His abode.

✱

"Kṛṣṇa is within you. As soon as He sees you are very
sincere, doing seriously, He'll give you all intelligence.
Buddhi-yogaṁ dadāmi tam. But if you are in doubt
whether Kṛṣṇa is present or not, then Kṛṣṇa will not

give you intelligence. That is the difficulty. He does not talk with a nonsense. He talks, but not with the nonsense. If you are above the nonsensical platform by sincere service, then Kṛṣṇa will talk with you from within" (Lecture, June 16, 1972, on *Bhāg.* 2.3.20).

You will talk with me, Kṛṣṇa, but not if I doubt You. That is the problem. If You had someone worthy to talk to, You would say, "Go preach in America," or, "Please repair My temple," or, "I am with you."

I can try to serve, and, if You like, You can signal me from within. Śrīla Prabhupāda told me in 1967 that I would be able to understand the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā* because I was sincere and because You would reveal it. You reveal Yourself in simple ways, in small amounts, even to devotees who are not so advanced. How else can we stay clear of *māyā*'s intrigues except by Your guidance?

Lord Śiva said that You are "the only Supreme Person, the cause of all causes . . . (*tvam eka ādyaḥ puruṣaḥ*)" (*Bhāg.* 4.24.63). Before the worlds are created, the energy to make them remains within You in a dormant state (*supta-śakti*). Then, step by step in the evolutionary process, the world is manifested. As the supreme creator, You are the *aiśvarya* Lord.

Prabhupāda explains to us why You created the worlds: ". . . the Lord wants to give some facility to those living entities who want to imitate the Lord in His enjoyment. . . . For instance, sometimes children want to imitate their mother and cook in the kitchen, and, at such a time, the mother supplies them with some toys, so that the child can imitate her cooking."

My dear Kṛṣṇa, why can't people understand that You are the origin of everything? They are so covered by the material energy. If I go on hearing the Bhakti-

vedanta purports, I will learn of my relationship with You. All conditioned souls are in a predicament similar to mine. They can become released in the same way I will achieve release. Lord Śiva compares our activities in the material world to the bees' enjoyment of honey as it has been collected in the honeycombs. The bees work hard to gather honey, but when they try to enjoy it, they are bitten by other bees. Human beings build empires. "Sometimes nations declare war on one another, and the human beehives become sources of misery" (Bhāg. 4.24.64, purport).

By observation, guided by the *sāstras*, we can see You, Kṛṣṇa, as time, destroying everything within the material world. We should not remain in that kind of relationship with You where we prey upon others until we get crushed by You in Your form as time and death.

How can the human beehive find relief? People should realize that nothing is permanent in this material world. Therefore, their greedy desires are futile. People should take shelter in You. You say in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, "A person in full consciousness of Me, knowing Me to be the ultimate beneficiary of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attains peace from the pangs of material miseries" (Bg. 5.29).

Lord Śiva gave the Pracetās teachings in the form of a *stotra*, or prayer. He advised them to keep that important *stotra* within their minds. Thus they would become topmost *yogīs* by constantly thinking of You and chanting Your glories. He also told them to act silently and to take the vow of great sages—*muni-vrata*.

Is this applicable to us today? Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "We should also take this opportunity in life to become

as good as a great saint simply by not talking unnecessarily with unwanted persons. We should either talk of Kṛṣṇa or chant Hare Kṛṣṇa undeviatingly. This is called *muni-vrata*” (*Bhāg.* 4.24.71, purport).

My dear Lord, I like the sound of that. There are many people who say that we can’t spend all our time chanting because we have to perform our occupational duties. Still, our first duty is to keep in constant contact with You. If someone follows all the rules and regulations of *varṇāśrama-dharma*, but doesn’t remember his eternal relationship with You, then all his activities are a waste of time. The art of human life is to execute those occupational duties, but at the same time, to satisfy You. It’s also true that by performing our duties, chanting and hearing become much more possible.

I feel enthusiastic when I hear these statements. I pray to You for the faith to follow Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions with enthusiasm. I know that the secret of spiritual life is to please my spiritual master (*yasya deve parā bhaktir*). By my faith in Śrīla Prabhupāda, You will reveal the imports of the Vedic literatures to me. Faith means not only prayer, but practical application of the philosophy. What is the practical application? Only to love You. All I need is faith.

✱

Lord Śiva gave the Pracetās and the people who hear his *stotra* a benediction. But whatever benediction they want, they can achieve simply by becoming Your devotee and the devotee of Your pure devotees. Lord Śiva said, “Although rendering devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead and worshipping

Him are very difficult, if one vibrates or simply reads this *stotra* [prayer], composed and sung by me, he will very easily be able to invoke the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead” (*Bhāg.* 4.24.76).

Except for Your service, all other desires are illusion, *māyā*. I am inquiring about my relationship with You, but all I have to do is to understand *jīvera* ‘*svarūpa*’ *haya*—*kṛṣṇera* ‘*nitya-dāsa*’—I am Your eternal servant. Then I can go on engaging in Your service in order to realize the highest perfection. I have nothing separate to desire. Even my desire to know my relationship with You is fulfilled by engaging constantly in Your loving service.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes: “If we persistently engage in devotional service, certainly all our desires will be fulfilled in due course of time” (*Bhāg.* 4.24.79, purport).

*

Lord Kṛṣṇa, You are known as Urukrama because of Your wonderful acts. Nowadays, bogus *svāmīs* come from India and proclaim that they are God only because they can meditate and present themselves as big-bearded *avatāras*. But, to be God, one should be able to perform the same marvelous, inconceivable acts that You performed. You married 16,000 princesses by expanding Yourself into 16,000 separate forms. You built 16,000 palaces for those wives and stayed with each one simultaneously. When Nārada Muni visited You in Dvārakā, he was amazed to witness Your pleasing behavior with each of Your queens. (Nārada is not easily amazed since he himself knows the mystic arts.)

You also killed giant demons even in Your infancy. You lifted a large hill on Your pinky when You were seven years old. No one can duplicate Your pastimes.

Dear Lord, I can't remember everything I wrote today, but I tried to understand better my relationship with You. You are so great that even the greatest minds and demigods cannot speak to You. Lord Brahmā had to meditate on the shore of the Kṣīrodakaśāyī Ocean when he wanted to inquire from You, and You replied in his thoughts. I should not presume to talk with You. Yet You invite us to be open with You. Surely the best course is to follow the *mahājanas* and the scriptures in the way they describe You and Your relationship with the *jīvas*. I am doing that, reading about You, hearing about You, and perhaps there is not much I need to add; but I have embarked on this writing and I feel I have embarked on an important topic. Even though I'm not fit to speak on it, I can't let it go.

I want to find You as my friend and master. I am daring also to get a glimpse of why I am afraid to go further in my relationship with You. What is holding me back? I'm aware that I'm reluctant to surrender completely, but I'm also reluctant to understand why I don't surrender. There are areas of my life that I wish to restrict even God from entering. I know this is foolish. Lack of surrender means opening myself for more suffering. The world is not a fit place for a gentleman, and only You can deliver us from this place. Why should I hide out here and say there are some things I would rather keep private, even from You? Why should I say to You, "You can have everything except this"?

As I write, bit by bit I hope to learn something. And I wish to praise You.



*Turning
Toward
Kṛṣṇa*

Day Five



“Actually we love Kṛṣṇa. That is a fact. Because we love Kṛṣṇa, therefore, you who did not even hear the name Kṛṣṇa, say four or five years ago . . . why you are now so much after Him? This is the proof that actually we are after Kṛṣṇa. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is being accepted in Western countries by the younger generation. Why? Because every one of us, we love Kṛṣṇa. But it is now covered by *māyā*. We have to simply take off the covering of *māyā*. Then we are Kṛṣṇa conscious. That is explained in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *nitya-siddha kṛṣṇa-prema ‘sādhya’ kabhu naya/śravaṇādi-śuddha-citte karaye udaya* [Pure love for Kṛṣṇa is eternally established in the hearts of living entities. It is not something to be gained from another source. When the heart is purified by hearing and chanting, the living entity naturally awakens (C.c., *Madhya* 22.107).]” (Lecture, May 27, 1972, on *Bhāg.* 7.5.22-34).

I can't say that by writing over these past few days I have achieved a breakthrough. I didn't really expect to, but I was drawn to the subject. Writing doesn't necessarily equal action. For example, last night I wrote about Vyāsadeva's despondency and Nārada's cure. Applying this to my own case, I recognized that whatever insufficiency I feel in my relationship with Kṛṣṇa can be overcome by concentrated hearing, chanting, and writing directly about Kṛṣṇa in His original form. Last night I thought I would end this book with anecdotes of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana.

Even as a literary idea, however, I found that I couldn't follow it up, what to speak of following it up in my life as Vyāsa did, by profound meditation. We want to change our lives, but it's hard. Sometimes outer events act on us to change us. But to change our hearts takes time. We can change ourselves gradually by practicing *sādhana*. *Sādhana* brings real change. Real change is deep. It encompasses both the external and the internal. If someone is forced to go to prison, that revolutionizes his or her life. Sometimes apparently external events force us to change.

I am musing here. My point is that I have only been able to make a few forays into a topic too big to solve. My relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa is the most worthy topic; I cannot help but benefit by exploring it. Someone might say that a halfhearted attempt at a vital subject is harmful, but it's only harmful if we think we have completely dispensed with it. If we accept that we have succeeded only in opening a window to let us see what we couldn't see before, then it is helpful.

This writing reminds me that Lord Kṛṣṇa is a person and that He is part of my life. I become embarrassed when I see that I don't make my relationship with the

Supreme Person the most important relationship in my life. I want to improve that. I am hopeful.

What's the difficulty? Lord Kṛṣṇa is so kind and approachable. He makes Himself available to me, especially in His holy names. Writing about my lack of devotion makes me aware of Prabhupāda's and Lord Kṛṣṇa's standing invitation to exchange with them. They don't reject me. I can take up Kṛṣṇa consciousness earnestly and improve my relationship with the Lord, who is my ever well-wisher and protector.

I smell the clean Atlantic air and think how there are no bombs in the area, no pesticides, no carbon monoxide from car exhaust. I see only tall, jagged rocks—they look like stalagmites—growing up from the floor of the ocean. There is a monument here commemorating the 1509 killing of Irish patriots by the British. Someone has placed a bit of sheep's wool at its base, along with a coin and a flower. I dared not disturb it. I walked around to see the monument's back. A crucifix was inscribed in the rock along with some words I couldn't understand.

There's nothing else in my life except my relationship with Kṛṣṇa. I stand on terra firma, looking at this monument, and realize that everything comes from God. I am part of the ecological system, or at least my body is, breathing oxygen as I walk and talk. Kṛṣṇa is in control. *Mayādhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ, sūyate sa-carācaram*: "This material nature, which is one of My energies, is working under My direction, O son of Kuntī, producing all moving and nonmoving beings. Under its rule, this manifestation is created and annihilated again and again" (Bg. 9.10).

Śrīla Prabhupāda says that if we are sincere, we will be able to understand this philosophy. "A person may

have a bona fide spiritual master and may be attached to a spiritual organization, but still, if he is not intelligent enough to make progress, then Kṛṣṇa from within gives him instructions so that he may ultimately come to Him without difficulty. The qualification is that a person always engage himself in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and with love and devotion render all kinds of services. . . . If a devotee is not intelligent enough to make progress on the path of self-realization, but is sincere and devoted to the activities of devotional service, the Lord gives him a chance to make progress and ultimately attain to Him” (Bg. 10.10, purport).



“Thus the sage, being dissatisfied at heart, at once began to reflect . . . ” (*Bhāg.* 1.4.27). I am turning to the *Bhāgavatam* section on Vyāsadeva’s despondency. Why does he feel incomplete after writing the Vedic literature? Vyāsa makes his own diagnosis, “This may be because I did not specifically point out the devotional service of the Lord (*bhāgavata-dharma*), which is dear both to perfect beings and to the infallible Lord” (*Bhāg.* 1.4.31). Just as he was thinking this, Vyāsa’s spiritual master, Nārada Muni, arrived at the hermitage of his illustrious disciple. Gradually, Nārada explained that “Vyāsa’s disappointment was due to insufficiency in presenting the science of devotional service.”

Regarding my own relationship with Kṛṣṇa, is there more to say? I can go on citing my shortcomings, but it would be better to spend my time hearing about His name, form, pastimes, and qualities. This is the medicine I need. If I feel a shortcoming in my relationship

with Kṛṣṇa, I simply need to increase *śravaṇam-kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ-smaraṇam*, not in a general way, but specifically about His form in Vṛndāvana.

Śrīla Vyāsadeva already knew what was wrong with him, but he presented his predicament before his spiritual master. “You are as good as the all-pervasive Super-soul. Please, therefore, find out the deficiency in me, despite my being absorbed in transcendence under disciplinary regulations and vows” (*Bhāg.* 1.5.7).

Śrī Nārada said, “You have not actually broadcast the sublime and spotless glories of the Personality of Godhead” (*Bhāg.* 1.5.8).

Of course, in my case, since I am not the empowered literary incarnation of God, Śrīla Prabhupāda is not going to ask me to compile scriptures which will be proclaimed by Lord Caitanya as the “spotless *Purāṇa*.” Still, the root cause of *anyone’s* despondency is the “deliberate avoidance of glorifying the Lord.” In Vyāsa’s case, it was easy to remedy. He took the cue from his spiritual master and started to meditate. He saw the Lord, along with the material energy, the *jīvas*, and their sufferings, and revealed the remedy for suffering, *bhakti-yoga*.

In my case, it may take repeated doses of hearing from Śrīla Prabhupāda. I need to develop a taste and the ability to sustain constant hearing and chanting of Kṛṣṇa’s glories.

As a writer, especially, I have the responsibility to write about Kṛṣṇa. “Don’t write nonsense,” Śrīla Prabhupāda said. “The fallen souls are very eager to receive novel information every day, and the transcendentalists like Vyāsadeva or Nārada can supply such eager people in general with unlimited news from the spiritual world” (*Bhāg.* 1.5.13, purport). On the one

hand, *only* the liberated souls on the level of Vyāsa and Nārada can write Vedic literature that will alleviate the pangs of material suffering, but if their representatives in disciplic succession keep the message intact, they can also become message-bearers for Nārada and Vyāsa. Thus Śrīla Prabhupāda, who himself wrote great quantities of topmost *bhakti-śāstras*, recommended his followers write and “help save the crippled humanity.”

Nārada directly advised his disciple, “Please, therefore, describe the transcendental pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa more vividly” (*Bhāg.* 1.5.21).

He is the goal of all works. He is the proprietor of all the planets. He is the well-wisher for all living entities. Those who take shelter of Him are freed from the pangs of material miseries and they attain peace (*śānti*).

Lord Kṛṣṇa came to this planet 5,000 years ago and enacted His eternal pastimes just to attract us. He played in Vṛndāvana as the lover of the *gopīs* (Gopī-jana-vallabha), as the hero of His cowherd friends (Gopāla), as the killer of demons (Agha-damana, etc.), as the beloved child of the elderly *gopas* and *gopīs* (Nanda-nandana), the protector of cows and *brāhmaṇas* and all living entities (Govinda).

It seems that we can increase our devotion only by regular increments of devotional practices. We *want* to hear more about Him. Therefore, let us continue as we are doing, but increase both the quantity and quality of our *sādhana*. Let’s not get deviated to “non-Kṛṣṇa” topics. Śrīla Prabhupāda warned us not to get absorbed in the daily newspapers and certainly not to read novels, attend the cinema, stay in hotels, go to dance clubs, or spend our time in mundane libraries. He wanted us to stay fixed on Kṛṣṇa. That means

hearing about Kṛṣṇa, chanting His names, and serving in His movement. It means preaching to others about the need to surrender to Kṛṣṇa.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is not sectarian. Joining His movement is not like joining a sports club. Many clubs are based on nostalgia. They watch old films, gather old photos, discuss pastimes, and erect memorials to obsolete teams whose members are dead or dying. It's a gesture in futility. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not like that. Kṛṣṇa is not a myth: He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the most lovable object. Our job is to be convinced of Kṛṣṇa's eternal living presence in all things. We become convinced by tasting the glory of *Bhagavad-gītā* and by associating with pure devotees whose vision is based on reality. Kṛṣṇa is the eternal, supreme spirit, God in the heart of all living entities, the Supreme Being who dwells in His spiritual kingdom, Goloka. Kṛṣṇa appeared in India, but He is *aham bīja-pradaḥ pitā*, the father of all living beings.



I remember the days when Śrīla Prabhupāda was dictating *Kṛṣṇa* book and sending me the tapes to type and edit. I was often the first lecturer who knew directly from Prabhupāda the extended pastimes of child Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. When Prabhupāda visited Boston in 1968, I had the opportunity to speak to an audience at Prabhupāda's request in his presence. After some preliminary philosophy, I began to tell one of the pastimes I had recently heard on tape. I told how Kṛṣṇa was a naughty child and had stolen yogurt and butter from a neighbor's stock. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma then distributed this butter to Their monkey friends.

When the monkeys were satisfied and wouldn't take more, the boys said, "This butter is useless. Even the monkeys won't take it!" When the neighbors caught the boys and accused Them, They said, "You think We don't get sufficient butter at home? We didn't steal anything." As I spoke, I saw my audience break into wonderful grins. I sensed that there was more to their smiles than my own presentation. Glancing at Śrīla Prabhupāda by my side and slightly behind me, I saw him smiling with pleasure to hear Kṛṣṇa's pastime repeated by his little son.

I pray that I may never give up the practice of speaking *kṛṣṇa-kathā* as ordered by Prabhupāda and that I may bring a smile to his face and, by reflection, to the hearts and faces of the audience.

✱

Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa—just say His names. Feel the joy in chanting. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted us to have a genuine taste for chanting. How can we propagate His holy names if they have not become a spontaneous joy in our own lives?

And preach. Don't do something impossible for yourself, but do what you can do to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. For me that means visiting temples and lecturing, meeting devotees who want to hear about Kṛṣṇa, and preaching at outside engagements where it's favorable and where they are not offensive. Go out, go country to country, town to town, door to door. *Yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa*. Become Kṛṣṇa conscious. *Kṛṣṇe matir astu*.

✱

Turn to Kṛṣṇa. He is the friendly bird on the tree of our bodies, witnessing our attachments and bitter and sweet experiences in the material world. Turn to Him for solace.

My dear Lord, I forgot You. Please take me back. “O Gopīnātha, I am Your devotee, but having abandoned You and thus having forgotten my real treasure, I have worshipped this mundane world. . . . O Gopīnātha, You are indeed the wisest person. Please look for a way to bring about auspiciousness for this fool, and please do not consider this servant as an outsider” (“Gopīnātha,” Part II, verses 4, 8, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura).

*

We want to think of Kṛṣṇa. He is flowing in every moment, like blood circulating through our bodies. Although politicians decide on a nation’s fate, they themselves are playthings of the material energy. Kṛṣṇa, as time, imperceptibly bears down on them. Kṛṣṇa turns the seasons toward spring, and His energy integrates the planets and the universes. With a glance He enchants the *gopīs* in the *rāsa* dance, but that confidential pastime can be known only to those completely free of material lust.

Kṛṣṇa is in all things. We may contemplate Him in that way, but there is no substitute for regular scriptural study and prayer. Kṛṣṇa says, “Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master.” What will we learn from the bona fide spiritual master? “Having obtained real knowledge from a self-realized soul, you will never fall again into such illusion, for by this knowledge you will see that all living beings are but part of the Supreme, or, in other words, that they are Mine” (Bg. 4.35).

In his purport to this verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "Some think that we have nothing to do with Kṛṣṇa, that Kṛṣṇa is only a great historical personality and that the Absolute is the impersonal Brahman." The purpose of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is to love and accept Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme and to see everything in Him. This is the meaning of the Vedic aphorism, *tat tvam asi*. You, Lord Kṛṣṇa, You are that, too. You are Lord Nṛsiṃha, Varāha, the Supersoul. All living entities or phenomena are part of You or emanating from You. You are the Supreme Person, inexhaustible, simultaneously and inconceivably one with and different from anything in Your creation.

As I read, I find the *anartha* of skepticism still within me. Only Śrīla Prabhupāda can save me. Let me simply pray to him for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He gave me Kṛṣṇa consciousness at the beginning and he continues to be my source of realization.

Śrīla Prabhupāda tells me that it's illusion to think I am separate from Kṛṣṇa. He taught me the devotional science, and I am trying to hear it every day with submission, "We are all meant to satisfy Kṛṣṇa . . . "

Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "Even if you are considered to be the most sinful of all sinners, when you are situated in the boat of transcendental knowledge you will be able to cross over the ocean of miseries" (Bg. 4.36).

Śrīla Prabhupāda comments: "Proper understanding of one's constitutional position in relationship to Kṛṣṇa is so nice that it can at once lift one from the struggle for existence . . . " Just see the relationship—Lord Kṛṣṇa speaks and Śrīla Prabhupāda explains. Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "Surrender to Me," and Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "Surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa."

Lord Kṛṣṇa, at the end of the Fourth Chapter, orders Arjuna, "Therefore, the doubts which have arisen in your heart out of ignorance should be slashed by the weapon of knowledge. Armed with yoga, O Bhārata, stand and fight" (Bg. 4.42).

Śrīla Prabhupāda comments:

One who does not understand the instructions of the *Gītā* is faithless, and is to be considered to be misusing the fragmental independence awarded to him by the Lord. In spite of such instructions, one who does not understand the real nature of the Lord as the eternal, blissful, all-knowing Personality of Godhead is certainly fool number one. . . . One is, therefore, advised to study *Bhagavad-gītā*, or any other scripture, under a bona fide spiritual master, with service and surrender. A bona fide spiritual master is in the disciplic succession from time eternal, and he does not deviate at all from the instructions of the Supreme Lord as they were imparted millions of years ago to the sun-god, from whom the instructions of *Bhagavad-gītā* have come down to the earthly kingdom. One should, therefore, follow the path of *Bhagavad-gītā* as it is expressed in the *Gītā* itself and beware of self-interested people after personal aggrandizement who deviate others from the actual path. The Lord is definitely the supreme person, and His activities are transcendental. One who understands this is a liberated person from the very beginning of his study of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

"Don't waste a moment even," Śrīla Prabhupāda said to the devotees in Los Angeles in 1972, including the four newly initiated *sannyāsīs*. "We can understand things as they are if we receive the message of Urukrama, Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, you should not waste a

moment even with nonsense topics. We have got so many books. Either chant Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, or read books, discuss among yourselves, don't waste your time . . . Simply always praying, give aural reception to the message of Urukrama. Don't waste a single moment. This should be your life's policy."



"Come on," says Lord Kṛṣṇa, "do as My devotees do. Become My *bhakta*, always think of Me, bow down and worship Me. Then surely you will come to Me."

"O my Lord, Your devotees can see You through the ears by the process of bona fide hearing, and thus their hearts become cleansed, and You take Your seat there. You are so merciful to Your devotees that You manifest Yourself in the particular eternal form of transcendence in which they always think of You" (*Bhāg.* 3.9.11).

We are not alone. Kṛṣṇa is in our hearts. The *yogīs* and *sannyāsīs* know this, and they are never afraid. Kṛṣṇa protects us, but we should worship Him.

For example, we can develop a relationship with our temple Deity. Most of the ISKCON temples have Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities. If someone is interested in his relationship with Kṛṣṇa, worshipping the Deity is a good way to enhance it. Live in or near a temple and serve the Deity. Go to *maṅgala-ārati* and, later, to greet the Deities. If possible, be a part-time *pūjārī*. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that the *pūjārī* is the most fortunate person in the universe. We can see the Deities' various dresses and think of Them during the day when we are away from Them. We can pray to Them in a natural way. "A pure devotee is constantly engaged. Sometimes

he chants, sometimes he hears or reads books about Kṛṣṇa, or sometimes he cooks *prasādam* or goes to the marketplace to purchase something for Kṛṣṇa, or sometimes he washes the temple or the dishes—whatever he does, he does not let a single moment pass without devoting his activities to Kṛṣṇa. Such action is in full *samādhi*” (Bg. 12.2, purport).

If we are not *pūjārīs*, we can sit before the closed curtains while the *pūjārī* makes the offering, and sing of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes: *Bhaja bhakata-vatsala śrī-gaurahari!* “Just worship Śrī Gaurahari, who is always affectionate toward His devotees. He is the same Supreme Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, who sported in the cowherd pastures of Vraja and stole the hearts of Nanda and Yaśodā.” He eats the many fine foods prepared by Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Her *sakhīs*. “In great ecstasy and joy Kṛṣṇa eats the rice, curried vegetables, sweets, and pastries cooked by Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Kṛṣṇa’s funny *brāhmaṇa* friend Madhumaṅgala, who is very fond of *laḍḍus*, gets them by hook or by crook. Eating the *laḍḍus*, he shouts, ‘*Haribol! Haribol!*’ and makes a funny sound by slapping his sides under his armpits with his hands. Beholding Rādhārāṇī and Her *gopī* friends out of the corners of His eyes, Kṛṣṇa eats at the house of mother Yaśodā with great satisfaction.”

“Who is such a fool that he does not want to be Kṛṣṇa conscious by this simple method and thus attain the highest perfectional life of eternity, bliss and knowledge?” (Bg. 9.26, purport).

*

Do I feel separation from Kṛṣṇa? Yes, I do. Either I knew Him and now I am separated from Him, or I didn't know Him and I am separated from Him. I can't claim my feelings are *vipralambha*. The *gopīs* feel *vipralambha* when Kṛṣṇa leaves them in the middle of the *rāsa* dance. When *they* feel separation, they think of Him at every moment. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted all devotees to understand separation.

“To acquire this strong feeling of separation is the teaching of Lord Caitanya and His direct disciplic succession of *Gosvāmīs*. When we are not in physical contact with Kṛṣṇa, we can associate with Him like the *gopīs*, through feelings of separation. . . . Devotional service to Kṛṣṇa in feelings of separation elevates the devotee to the highest perfectional level, to the level of the *gopīs*. . . . Those who are in the disciplic succession of the Mādhva-Gauḍīya *sampradāya* should also feel the separation of Kṛṣṇa, worship His transcendental form, and discuss His transcendental teachings, His pastimes, His qualities, His entourage and His associations. The spiritual master should enrich the devotees to the highest devotional perfection. Feeling constant separation while engaged in the service of the Lord is the perfection of Kṛṣṇa consciousness” (*Kṛṣṇa*, Vol. 1, Chap. 34, p. 231).

I'm such a poor spirit. I don't feel *vipralambha*.

Does Kṛṣṇa love me?

Yes.

How do I know?

I believe it. It is stated in the scriptures. Śrīla Prabhupāda told us that Kṛṣṇa is our father and we are His children. Even when there is separation, the father will not forget his children, although the children may forget their father.

But do I *experience* His love?

I don't know what I experience. I know hunger in my belly, and indigestion and fear and anger and various satisfactions and disappointments. I feel elated during *kirtana* or when I am writing. I miss the devotees. I want Śrīla Prabhupāda to accept me, and I want to please him.

I admit it—there's a lack of experience of Kṛṣṇa in my life. I don't blame Kṛṣṇa for that. I have failed Him life after life.

Somebody must experience something. Did my spiritual master experience Kṛṣṇa?

Yes.

How do you know?

If I told you I saw it in his eyes, would you believe me? We could see in his actions and in his words that he knew and loved Lord Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda always spoke on Kṛṣṇa's behalf. He was completely dedicated to Kṛṣṇa's mission of reclaiming the conditioned souls back to Godhead. He was Kṛṣṇa's ambassador. Certainly he knew—knows—Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, his *praṇāma-mantra* states, "I offer my obeisances to His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who is very dear to Kṛṣṇa on this earth, having taken shelter at the lotus feet of the transcendental Lord." We sing every day that Śrīla Prabhupāda is always thinking of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Okay, but what about me? What is my relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa?

That's what I'm trying to understand. I want my relationship with Kṛṣṇa to be deep. Deep relationships become tumultuous. Just look at the ocean. Love of God in separation produces tears. Although I don't experience that yet, I think I should just go on with my

service and everything will be gradually revealed. Lord Kṛṣṇa has promised us that we will know Him, meet Him, and play with Him and His devotees in Goloka Vṛndāvana. The relationship is already there, and it's already favorable. I just have to develop it.

Lord Caitanya gave the analogy of the *bhakti-latā* and showed how it is meant to grow all the way to Goloka. We have to protect it with a fence so the mad elephant of *vaiṣṇava-aparādhā* doesn't ruin it, but it will grow.



Last night I had a strange dream. I was trying to keep track of material I was putting together for a book. I had my papers in an accordion file and I had also dictated material onto tapes. I was also supposed to take photos and do interviews. None of the material was in a safe place, and we were traveling. Neither did I have any time to work on it. We had to leave the house (or was it a boat?) where we were living, and I had to stash my files and notes in a cardboard box along with others' belongings. Someone came up to me, handed me a microcassette, and said, "I just found your tape #20. Do you need it?" Then a young woman came to me and said she would give me information about someone she met that would be useful for my project. I started to listen to her, but it was irrelevant and had no connection to Kṛṣṇa consciousness that I could see. The weather was foggy. I tried attaching a lens to the camera, but it didn't work . . .

I woke up from this dream with a spark. It seemed like chaos as I recall it. I wasn't remembering Kṛṣṇa in the dream. It occurred to me that my mind is like that dream. I try to make a little progress, and then some-

thing irrelevant comes up. I can't control my mind, just as I couldn't control what happened to the tapes and papers in my files. Someone is often coming up to me to speak something irrelevant. Śrīla Prabhupāda warns, "Don't waste time, don't talk rubbish." He wants us to be like the devotee in *The Nectar of Devotion* who experiences the symptom of *bhāva*, who is always anxious "whether I am spending my life in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and not wasting time."

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, am I attached to this tragicomic way of life, where things float in and out of my mind like a crazy dream? I say I want to steadily think of You and Your activities. Please save me from the doubt and lack of taste. I would like to be the servant of Your servant a hundred times removed and be a writer in Your cause.



Sunrise in harbor. Stiff roots from sea like artist's artifacts. Beach strewn with pebbles. Buttercups on this promontory rock. This day belongs to Kṛṣṇa. I have nothing to sacrifice or renounce because everything already belongs to Him.

I don't see Him—I'm blind and lack devotion, although He is everywhere. I want to see Him, but it also seems that I want to keep myself in the center. I don't want to fall in love.

It's sad, and I don't completely believe I'm like that. Everyone wants Kṛṣṇa's love.

I want Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Maybe I don't believe it could happen to me. But if I became Kṛṣṇa conscious, it would be wonderful. I like my life now, but it could be increased thousands of times in happiness. Then I

could convey the happiness of Kṛṣṇa to others. Anyway, I don't want to remain mediocre. At least I want to allow the possibility to happen—that I can fall in love completely with Lord Kṛṣṇa.

I will try. I won't shut up my heart like an oyster. I want Kṛṣṇa's love. I want to convey it to others. As a writer, I want to give up my little life and tell of the greatest one. Instead of writing from the viewpoint of a bumbling, so-called *sādhaka*, I would like to write as the one whose thoughts and dreams are filled with Kṛṣṇa's attractive and inconceivable qualities, name, and form. How to get there from here?

Reading books, practicing *sādhana*, adding prayer to my thoughts . . .

One thing I can say even now, Kṛṣṇa is always present everywhere. We just have to find Him out. Śrīla Prabhupāda says a geologist can find gold. We can find Kṛṣṇa.



My Relationship With Lord Kṛṣṇa, #5

Talk of Urukrama the wonderful
Actor, don't waste time in
rubbish talks. "But is Urukrama
real or just a story?"

You are just a story with your
porkpie hat and piano,
your attaché case and riding the
Long Island railroad and shot with
bullets on your way home from
New York City or Dallas.
It's you who are the myth.

Urukrama's described in Vedic books,
upheld by sages and He spoke Himself
in *Bhagavad-gītā*. Don't disbelieve.

He lifted the hill. He sent His pure
devotee Nārada to rescue a hunter and to
gave instructions to Dhruva so that the
five-year-old boy
saw Lord Viṣṇu in six months.

Kṛṣṇa appeared in the storefront in
NYC in Swami's singing and even when
the Swami was in India recuperating,
Kṛṣṇa's chant went to Santa Fe, L.A.,
and Boston and SF and straggling youths
became bright-faced. "Kṛṣṇa Chant
Startles London."

Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee wrote letters to his
American children, Hold on, I'm coming and
will settle quarrels and clear doubts
and ignite the flame of the

Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.
He's no myth. Faith in him built
temples of India and sent Swamiji
teaching from Sanskrit books all about
Kṛṣṇa. The six Gosvāmīs personally knew
His pastimes. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, Narottama,
and Viśvanātha and Baladeva and Bhaktivinoda
and Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī . . . Śrīla Prabhupāda,
all Kṛṣṇaites and I am following them
praising Urukrama.

His two steps covered the universe.
His third on Bali's head;
as a dwarf He did it.

As a golden fish He pulled the boat
across devastation waters and
saved the *Vedas*. As a tortoise He
became the pivot for the churning of
the milk ocean and appeared on top
of Mount Meru with many arms and
out of the milk ocean He appeared as
Dhanvantari holding the chalice of immortal nectar.
Defying the atheists as Lord Caitanya,
He appeared with the shoulders of a lion,
loudly chanting *harināma*, despite
the Kazi's threats. Playing the atheist
He came as Buddha and will
come as Kalki on a white horse when
the hour of *harināma* is no longer
openly available to the blood-drenched earth.
He's Time and Death and Silence
and Forbearance and all seasons and only
by a spark does He uphold all
the universes.
He's called Urukrama,
not impersonal or an imitation god
who can't do anything but speculate.

Best scholar Jīva Gosvāmī explains Kṛṣṇa
in *Ṣaṭ-sandarbhā* and Viśvanātha Cakravartī
tells inner meanings of conjugal *rāsa* and
young Baladeva saved the day at Jaipur,
quickly writing Gauḍīya's *Vedānta ṭīkā*
called *Govinda-bhāṣya*.

He stole the milk for Mādhavendra Purī.
He appears as round-eyed Jagannātha
and Balarāma is His mighty, handsome brother.
The *gopīs* gather to tell of His flute,
which they say makes the calves stop sucking
and maddens the birds and demigods' wives.
The demigods can't comprehend
such beautiful tunes,
the flute itself is selfish. Who can understand
when God plays on
His deep-sounding *muralī*?

His lotus feet are shelter for all
devotees. His smile dries up the ocean
of grief. He is the Supersoul and
the *brahmajyoti*. His appointed agents run
the universe and the demons are His backside.
Nothing happens without His knowledge,
and punishment is meted out by Yamarāja,
His own staunch devotee.
I praise Urukrama from what I've heard
and I believe in His inconceivable power.
Whatever He likes He does at His ease.
I hope He will bring me and keep
me in His service and you too.
Just sing His glories sincerely.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the following disciples and friends who helped produce and print this book:

Baladeva Vidyabhūṣaṇa dāsa

Caitanya-dayā-devī dāsī

Guru-sevā-devī dāsī

Kaiśorī-devī dāsī

Kalki-devī dāsī

Keśīhanta dāsa

Lalita-mañjarī-devī dāsī

Lalitāmṛta-devī dāsī

Madana-mohana dāsa

Mādhava dāsa

Madhumaṅgala dāsa

Nārāyaṇa-kavaca dāsa

Prāṇadā-devī dāsī

Rukmavatī-devī dāsī

Charlie Sullivan

Yamunā-devī dāsī

Special thanks to Nitāi-gaurasundara dāsa and Matsya-devī dāsī for their kind donation to print this book.

Other books by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami

Śrīla Prabhupāda

Prabhupāda Appreciation

With Śrīla Prabhupāda in the Early Days/

1966–1969: A Memoir

Life with the Perfect Master

Calling Out to Śrīla Prabhupāda/Poems and Prayers

Remembering Śrīla Prabhupāda

Prabhupāda-līlā

Prabhupāda Meditations (Vols 1-4)

Prabhupāda Nectar

Here is Śrīla Prabhupāda

He Lives Forever

Śāstra

Niti-śāstra: Sayings of Cāṇakya and Hitopadeśa

as Quoted By Śrīla Prabhupāda

Readings in Vedic Literature: The Tradition Speaks for Itself

A Handbook for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

Living with the Scriptures

Mukunda Mālā Stotra: The Prayers of King Kulaśekhara

The Daily News: All Things Fail Without Kṛṣṇa

Sādhana

Japa Walks, Japa Talks

Japa Reform Notebook (English/ Spanish)

Obstacles on the Path of Devotional Service

Reading Reform

Vaiṣṇava Behavior/ 26 Qualities of a Devotee
Truthfulness, The Last Leg of Religion
Entering the Life of Prayer
Vandanam: Handbook of Prayer
Begging for the Nectar of the Holy Name
From Imperfection, Purity Will Come About

Personal Writings

Radio Shows
My Relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa
Iṣṭa-gosṭī: Topics for Vaiṣṇava Discussion (Vols. 1–3)
Journal & Poems (Vols. 1–3)
ISKCON in the 1970s: Diaries (two-volume set)
Lessons from the Road (1987–88) (17 volumes)
Dear Sky: Letters From a Sannyāsī
My Search Through Books
Memory in the Service of Kṛṣṇa
Shack Notes
The Wild Garden: Collected Writings 1990–1993
A Visit to Jagannātha Purī

Fiction

Nimāi dāsa and the Mouse: A Fable
Nimāi's Detour: A Story
Gurudeva and Nimāi: Struggling for Survival
Choṭa's Way
Am I A Demon or A Vaiṣṇava?
Viṣṇu-rāta Vijaya: The Story of an Ex-hunter
Śrī Caitanya-Dayā: The Diaries of Harideva and Chayādevī

Poetry

Under the Banyan Tree

Dust of Vṛndāvana

Pictures from Bhagavad-gītā As It Is and Other Poems

In Praise of the Mahājanas and Other Poems (1983)

The Worshipable Deity and Other Poems (1984)

Talking Freely to My Lords

Prose-poetry at Castlegregory, Ireland

Writing in Gratitude

